Sunday, February 14, 2010 ★★ Vol. 25 / No. 68

CHARM OFFENSIVE As the Year of the Tiger roars in, a wilderness of lucky charms in the festive colors of red and gold festoon stalls in Binondo, Manila. There are as many charms as there are human concerns: from prosperity to protection of the family against sickness and harm to enhancing relationships to winning the lotto big time. Kung hei fat choy! VINO ELICAÑO

AFP chief: Obey courts

Gibo: No excuse for inaction on 'Morong 43'

By Marlen Ramos and TJ Burgonio

ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF GEN. VICTOR Ibrado yesterday told all military units to "follow court orders" after officers holding 43 health workers arrested on suspicion of being communist rebels failed to comply with a writ of habeas corpus issued by the Supreme Court.

Gilbert Teodoro, the standard-bearer of the ruling Lakas-Kampi-CMD and former defense secretary, said the military's failure to present the 43 health workers to the Court of Appeals' First Division, as ordered by the high court, was "unreasonable."

Lt. Col. Romeo Brawner, the AFP spokesperson, said Ibrado gave no specific directive to the 2nd Infantry Division holding the so-called "Morong 43," but merely issued "general orders" in dealing with legal issues stemming from military operations.

"General Ibrado reiterated that we should always respect and follow the orders of the courts," Brawner said in a phone interview.

He declined to comment on the legal issues concerning the Feb. 6 arrest and continued detention of two doctors and 41 other health workers, saying the Office of the Solicitor General and state prosecutors were already handling the case.

But Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Raul Gonzalez defended the military and said it had offered a legitimate reason for its failure to produce the health workers in court.

Gonzalez said the military should be given ample time to prepare security measures against a possible ambush and an attempt by the communist New People's Army (NPA) to

JPP CHIEF/ A11

More Pinoys on charm offensive in Chinatown

By Tina G. Santos

HOPING TO FINALLY FIND love or win the lotto this year? Boost your chances by paying a visit to lucky charm shops in Binondo, Manila.

According to shop owners in Manila's Chinatown, the number of Filipinos buying lucky charms is growing compared to the number of ethnic Chinese.

"Every year, more people patronize my store and most of my clients are Filipinos. I guess it's because Filipinos are very superstitious," said Marietta "Tita Marie" Tiu on Friday.

Tiu is a feng shui practitioner and owner of a general merchandise store on Ongpin Street.

MORE A10

Sexiest song of all: Let's get physical

LOS ANGELES—MOVE over, Madonna. Watch out, Barry White.

The winners of the sexiest song of all time is—Olivia Newton-John with her hit, "Physical," according to music publication Billboard.

BILLBOARD/ A14

Retired general, wife serenade heroes: 'Mona Lisa' to 'I Will Survive'

By Fe Zamora

THAT "THEY LIE THERE AND they die there" is no longer true of wounded soldiers confined at the Armed Forces of the Philippines Medical Center (AFPMC).

The line, borrowed from the Nat King Cole hit, "Mona Lisa," used to describe the soldiers' condition while confined at the AFPMC.

But not during the pre-Valentine concert held at the hospital auditorium last Thursday. Wounded heroes—some in bandages, some hobbling on crutches—hummed along to a lively *Sundiman*, "Tinikoh-tikoh," sung by one of their own, retired Brig. Gen. Felix Brawner Jr., former Scout Rangers commandant who has found a new career as a baritone.

"Mona Lisa' is past. Now, it's 'I will survive,'" said AFPMC deputy for administration Col. Renato Guevarra, referring to the soldiers' collective mood.

"Things have improved. They are given what is due them," he said.

The pre-Valentine concert and gift-giving are a quarterly civic activity of the Ladies of the Association of Generals and Flag Officers (Agfo) with the Rotary and Inner Wheel Clubs

RETIRED/ A13

NOYNOY SHALANI

A love story people are talking about

By Thelma Sioson San Juan
Lifestyle Editor

NOYNOY'S SQUEEZE Shalani has long heard mother but scrutiny people, politics.

SHE STOOD AT THE LANAI door quietly, a box of cake in her hands, just waiting for her presence to be noticed. If we didn't look that way we wouldn't have known that our mute hawk gaze was already there—with the dessert.

Shalani Soledad, 29, joined our lunch the way she did the national scene—quietly. Until her presence was noticed, triggering a media frenzy. People were suddenly curious about the beautiful, young woman the elusive bachelor Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, 50, has been seeing.

Except for a few "ambush interviews," she stayed lowkey, although amply photographed whenever she showed up at official functions. Generally, however, she was unseen and unheard from.

That was until this day, when she agreed to join the Thanksgiving turkey lunch our chef/friend prepared upon our request. This was late last year. We'd join Shalani a few times after that—at dinners and in the Inquirer Look magazine cover shoot at Shangri-La Makati last December, when she took the MRT from Valenzuela City to Makati to beat the holiday Edsa traffic and not delay the shoot.

Simple, no-fuss girl, we said as early as then.

NEXT/ E1

Gordon wants tax on text to hike teachers' pay to P40k

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

DICK: Unpopular but I'll risk it.

IF HE BECOMES THE NEXT President, Sen. Richard Gordon plans to raise the cost of mobile phone text messaging to P1.50 per message, an admittedly unpopular stand considering how Filipinos are addicted to texting.

"If you don't like it, you don't have to vote for me. But I don't want to grow old and say that I never tried," he said.

Told that he could be perceived as arrogant, Gordon said he was just answering questions "with conviction."

"Forgive me if I give the wrong impression, but I've won all my political positions being like this," said the 64-year-old senator who shot to national prominence as the energetic and youthful mayor of Olongapo City and the first chair of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority.

He said he would use the projected P365 billion a year to be generated from the 50-centavo tax per text to raise the monthly salary of public school teachers to P40,000 as well as provide grade-school students with electronic book readers.

He said a teacher in Singapore earns more than P220,000 a month compared to an average P14,000 for a Filipino teacher.

Noting that the government spends P4,000 per student per year on textbooks that are often marred with errors, he said he can equip every Filipino elementary school student with a $100 Kindle, a wireless electronic reading device that can be stocked with electronic versions of books and other printed material.

A bill proposing to impose a five-centavo excise tax on every text, picture, video and audio clip sent through mobile phones to generate between P28 billion and P56 billion a year was met with stiff opposition in Congress last year.

But this has not deterred Gordon, the candidate for president of his own Bagumbayan Party, with former Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando as his running mate.

Gordon, who counts on the

GORDON/ A14

• **US female** professor shoots dead 3 fellow teachers, hurts 3 others • Clinton back to work after heart repair WORLD • **Enfant terrible** of UK fashion gone at 40 • Loren: embarrassing to admit—I've not had a date since 1967 • Unsealing Maurice's lips on Manila's lovers LIFESTYLE • **Confessions** of a cougar or what's age got to do with it? • **Top 12** romantic movies to swoon over • **7 wide-eyed** tips for a successful blind date • **4 ways** to find out that he's/she's not just into you • **In the mood** for motel food SUNDAY INQUIRER MAGAZINE • **How to** show love to your parents JUNIOR INQUIRER • **New hunk** in gay executive's harem ENTERTAINMENT

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Isabela	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Mostly Cloudy	Ilocos	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Mostly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Iloilo	Mostly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Metro Davao	Mostly Cloudy	Ilo - Ilo City	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Legaspi	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy

SWERTRES

2 p.m.	6	5	4
5 p.m.	3	1	4
9 p.m.	0	4	1

6/42 LOTTO

9 5 9 1 9 8

6/45 LUZ-VIS-MIN

6 8 19 21 28 38

P7,149,000.00

POWERBALL (Feb 10)

47 1 30 54 25 + 10

P96,450,849.00

Villar seen to get Bro. Mike's nod

By Philip C. Tubeza, Juliet Labog-Javellana and Michael Lim Ubac

HONG KONG—NACIONALISTA PARTY (NP) standard-bearer Sen. Manuel Villar arrived here yesterday afternoon to meet with Filipino migrants and influential lay Catholic leaders, including Bro. Mariano "Mike" Velarde of the charismatic group El Shaddai.

Villar was in town with Cooperative Development Authority Director Frank Padilla and other OFC officer last night. Today he is to attend the Chinese New Year celebrations of El Shaddai's Hong Kong chapter.

Shortly before she herself flew to the former Crown Colony, Villar's running mate, Sen. Loren Legarda, told the media that Velarde "the only one invited by Brother Mike."

Legarda told the Inquirer by phone that Velarde had personally extended the invitation to her and Villar to attend today's gathering in Hong Kong, which boasts nearly 100,000 Filipino voters.

The gathering is to be held on Chinese New Year celebration, left to Velarde to say whether he would endorse Villar and Legarda.

But he confirmed that among the candidates in past and coming elections, the NP standard-bearer stands above the others.

Hidden, the administrator of the Light Rail Transit Authority also chairs Subay, the El Shaddai security for group.

"Their friendship goes a long, long way. Compared to all others in the past, this one has the longest friendship with him," Robles told the Inquirer on the phone.

According to Robles, Villar has enjoyed Velarde's support since he first ran for congressman up to the time he became Speaker of the House of Representatives and Senate President.

Explaining the friendship, Robles said Velarde was one of the pioneers of man boxing in the country and Villar used to supply sand in his business.

Velarde reportedly ventured into the residential subdivision business in the 1980s after graduating from the University of the East with a degree in geodetic engineering.

Like Villar, Velarde's property was also deemed to have benefited from the controversial C-5 road extension project. But the Senate decided not to include the politically influential church leader in its investigation.

Verbal, nonverbal clues

In a statement sent to the Inquirer through Robles later yesterday, Velarde confirmed that Villar was the only presidential candidate invited to join him at today's gathering.

But when asked if he was supporting Villar's candidacy over the others, Velarde merely said: "We go a long way back and we are very friendly."

Those of conditioning that his boss was inclined to back Villar, Robles said the invitations for Villar to join Velarde in an El Shaddai event was "out of the ordinary."

But he added that as a matter of courtesy Velarde did not openly endorse candidates but merely gave verbal or nonverbal clues, for his flock to "discern" during El Shaddai prayer rallies in Pandacan City close to Election Day.

Robles also said that if there was someone Velarde was "openly and wholeheartedly endorsing," it would be the Bulacan party-list group, of which his son Jose is a representative.

Villar arrived on board a Cathay Pacific flight at around 2:40 p.m. with his wife, Las Piñas Rep. Cynthia Villar.

The senator is expected to attend Mass at the Church of the Annunciation in Tsuen Wan district before having dinner with Padilla and other OFC leaders.

He is an also expect today with leaders of the militant group Migrante before attending the El Shaddai celebration.

Villar's NP has allied with the militant Makabayan alliance, which has a strong presence in the Filipino community in Hong Kong.

According to Migrante, Hong Kong has one of the highest number of registered voters among overseas Filipino workers, and had the highest voter turnout overseas during the 2004 and 2007 elections.

Loren's adviser

Legarda disclosed to the Inquirer that it was Velarde himself who had advised her to confer with Villar.

"I was consulting him last year on who to run with after Chiz Escudero forsaken the Nacionalista People's Coalition (NPC)," Legarda said.

"Chiz is gone," she quoted Velarde as saying. "Don't look too far. You should be with Manny (Villar)."

Velarde had earlier been groomed to be the NPC's standard-bearer, with Legarda as his running mate. But he backed out at the last minute.

Legarda said she and Velarde meet for lunch almost every month.

"The last time we had lunch together, he was with his daughter and son," she said.

'Bets should know where to post ads'

ALL CANDIDATES, STATE FORMER Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) chair Bayani Fernando, who is running for vice president, should direct their people to post their campaign materials only in designated places, and current MMDA Chair Oscar Inocencio.

"Being a true chairperson, he (Fernando) knows that there are rules to be implemented. These candidates should be good examples to their followers," Inocencio said in a statement.

Inocencio vowed to tear down all campaign materials found outside the designated areas in Metro Manila, "irrespective of political parties and affiliations."

He said campaign posters were destroying the visual landscape of Metro Manila and violated the provisions of the Fair Elections Act on guiding common parties.

He warned candidates and their political parties that legal cases would be filed against them should they fail to follow the rules on campaign advertisements.

As in previous elections, the MMDA is standing to be deputized by the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to be the lead agency in removing illegal posters.

An agreement between the MMDA and the Comelec is expected to be signed in the regular Metro Manila Council meeting on Feb. 15.

Simultaneous with the start of the official campaign period, the MMDA has ordered its Road-wise Sidewalk Clearing Operations Group to remove all campaign materials illegally posted along major thoroughfares. Nikko Dizon

Luisita massacre victims: 7 or 2?

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LUCENA CITY—Former Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman, a supporter of Liberal Party standard-bearer Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, succumbs to spasms on the number of striking workers killed in the Cojuangco-owned Hacienda Luisita the years ago were exaggerated.

"There were lots of news accounts on the number of casualties but the truth is there were only two victims [not seven as usually reported]. I saw the bodies with my own eyes when I visited their wake and gave financial assistance from the government," Soliman told an assembly of students, teachers and nuns at Sacred Heart College here Friday.

But Libo-Bato, acting United Luisita Workers' Union president, called Soliman's "liar."

"Who's lying. How can that be when their bloody event was fully covered and reported by local and international media, aside from readily available government documents?" said Bato when contacted by the Inquirer for comment.

"The camp of Noynoy is really desperate to escape the ghosts of the Hacienda Luisita massacres. They are now trying to twist the facts surrounding the massacre," Bato said over the phone.

He reiterated that the total number killed at Hacienda Luisita was seven.

"Aside from the seven, another seven union members also became victims of a series of extrajudicial killings that followed the massacre," he said.

In a follow-up email, Bato identified the victims as Jessa Lota, Jaime Sanchez, Adriano Caballeza Jr., Jaime Bautista, Asaki Bulan, Jhun David and Jhayvie Bacilla.

"They were all farmers and workers of Hacienda Luisita. And we will continue with our struggle to give them justice," he said.

Told of Bato's statement during the press conference of all the forum, Soliman replied that the other five victims could have been comrades and not farmers or workers at the sugar estate.

"The two victims were from Hacienda Luisita. The other five that they have been claiming (as victims), I don't know where they brought their victims. I only saw two bodies but not the other five. I was looking for them [but did not find them]. That's what I meant," she explained.

Val Aquino-Dee, sister of Sen. Aquino, who was with Soliman, insisted that their family should not be blamed for the killings. She said the protesting farmers were influenced by "leftist" elements.

Bato called Aquino-Dee's statement "forehead lines" of the Cojuangco clan.

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- Author, NCLEX-RN in a Flash. Promotional co. Jones and Bartlett (c.S.A.
- Doctor of Entrepreneurial Management – Ateneo Graduate School of Business
- Master of Arts in Nursing – Major in Nursing Service Administration, University of Santo Tomas (perfect scorer in oral defense)
- Bachelor of Science in Nursing – Cum Laude, University of Santo Tomas (perfect scorer in oral defense)
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- 2005 Best and Young Entrepreneur of the Year Finalist, SGV Foundation
- 2006 Nineteenth and Fifteen Young Global Leaders Awardee
- 2007 10 Inspiring Filipino Entrepreneurs, by Negosyo Advocacy Group
- 2008 Bangga Artista Who is He by Nicki

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- Mosby's Essential Concepts for the Philippine Nurse Licensure Exam - Elsevier Inc. (c.S.A.
- Ray A. Gapuz NCLEX-RN in a Flash. Jones & Bartlett Publisher MA., U.S.A.
- The ABC's of passing the Philippine Nursing Board Exams (NLE)
- The ABC's of passing Foreign Nursing Exams (CGFNS/CLEX)
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Teodoro tells Mangudadatu: Submit to an investigation

By TJ Burgonio

ADMINISTRATION PRESIDENTIAL CANdidate Gilbert Teodoro has advised ally Buluan Vice Mayor Ismael Mangudadatu to submit himself to an investigation of the fatal shooting of a suspect in the Nov. 23 Maguindanao massacre.

The suspect, Tawasan Kamsalan, was shot and killed in Mangudadatu's two police escorts at a Davao City mall where Mangudadatu was with some of his children on Thursday night.

"I have talked to him and advised him, and he told me he would be open to any investigation to give light to the incident," Teodoro told reporters yesterday.

He also appealed to the police to thoroughly investigate the incident "so there won't be a whitewash."

Mangudadatu is running for governor of Maguindanao under the ruling Lakas-Kampi-CMD.

His wife, two sisters and an aunt were among the 57 people abducted and murdered in Ampatuan, Maguindanao, on Nov. 23 last year allegedly by a member and armed supporters of the rival Ampatuan clan.

The Ampatuans and Mangudadatus are known administration allies, credited with delivering crucial votes for President Macapagal-Arroyo in the 2004 presidential vote.

In the aftermath of the massacre, Mr Arroyo distanced herself from the Ampatuans, and Teodoro led key officials of Lakas-Kampi in expelling the Ampatuans from the party. Teodoro also accompanied Mangudadatu when he filed his certificate of candidacy.

Teodoro said the mall killing was "worrisome" and should prompt heightened vigilance by the police.

"The police have to be doubly on the alert. I'm concerned about the general security situation in the area," said the former defense secretary, adding that he was bracing it up as the Philippine National Police and the Commission on Elections to determine the level of threat against Mangudadatu and if there was any need to beef up his security.

In Davao City, Mangudadatu yesterday said the mall incident proved that danger continued to haunt him and his family even if those who wanted to harm have already in jail.

"They really want to kill me... my life is at very high risk," said Mangudadatu, who claimed that Kamsalan had tried to grab one of his daughters.

He said Kamsalan also tried to grab the service firearm of one of his guards, prompting the latter to shoot him.

Police investigators said Kamsalan, described by an Ampatuan lawyer as a trusted man of Maguindanao Gov. Andal Ampatuan Sr., was unarmed.

Charged with murder

Datuvidal Kamsalan, Kamsalan's wife, claimed that Mangudadatu ordered his bodyguards to shoot her husband without provocation.

On the basis of Datuvidal's affidavit, Mangudadatu and his escorts, policemen Sarah Linahan Sunza and Ibrahim Langalen, were charged with murder. They have been given five days from Friday to answer the charges.

A lawyer for the Ampatuans, Philip Pinajayo, said what happened may have been a chance encounter.

Kamsalan may have seen Mangudadatu with his armed escorts and his natural reaction was to run away, Pinajayo said.

But Mangudadatu maintained that it was Kamsalan who attacked him and his children.

He denied ordering his bodyguards to shoot Kamsalan.

He said his initial reaction when Kamsalan tried to grab his daughter was to hide with his children.

In Cotabato City, Kamsalan's relatives confirmed that he was among the "most wanted" of Andal Sr.

Bai Datalo Abdullatif Adas, Andal Sr.'s spiritual adviser, said Kamsalan was more like a court jester whose "weapon was only his jokes."

"He was a person with a good sense of humor. And all that will be buried with him today are his jokes, new jokes after another," said Adas. With Dennis Jay C. Santos and Ruth R. Mendoza, Inquirer Mindanao

R. Evangelista; 69

ROMEO EVANGELISTA OF MALIBAY(BOSO), San Isidro, Bulacan, died on Feb. 7 at the age of 69.

He is survived by his wife Elvira, children Arthur and Noemi, Redmon and Shirley, Wilfred, Ma. Christina and Elmer, Henry and Mel, Arnold, Carol and Rommel, Ruth and Mitchel, and Julius; and grandchildren Nikki, Joan, Jewel, Don Enrico, Magnolia, Lucy Mykel, Gelchem, Beatriz, John Henz, Dandee and Glenn. Interment is on Feb. 13 at 9 a.m. at Infinito Memorial Park, San Ildefonso.

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Tales of love inspire at Inquirer Read-Along

IN CELEBRATION OF "HEART MONTH," stories about different kinds of love highlighted yesterday's Inquirer Read-Along storytelling program for children.

Some 60 children were treated to a trove of love stories—tales about a mother's love for her children, a family's love for their house help, and diverse people's love and respect for one another.

The session featured television personality Li Reyes and Sophia Ashford principal Ann Abocejo.

A special Inquirer Read-Along session was also held on Feb. 6 for over a hundred children at the Playtime ng Kalusugan in Mandaluyong City with Miss Earth-Philippines' beauties as guest readers. Among them were reigning Miss Earth-Air Sandra Ardiner, Miss Philippines-Earth 2007 Jessica Hart and Miss Philippines Earth 2003 Cudrow Aguilar.

The three Miss Earth beauties all celebrated their birthdays this month: Ardiner, Feb. 3; Hart, Feb. 4; and Aguilar, Feb. 6) and decided to reach out and spread time with the children as a gesture of thanksgiving.

Actress and model Reyes read "Mga Isnab ng Aswa, Bakit Iba Ang Gulay ng mga Lalo" (Oddities of the Vet, Why the Bears Have Different Colors) as retold by Rene O. Villanueva and published by Lampara Books. The story talks about being content with what one has, and about respect for one another despite differences.

Although it was her first time as a storyteller, Reyes, a member of the song-and-dance group GRV, looked and sounded very much like a pro.

"When I was in elementary and high school, I would sometimes be picked as a student teacher. I would teach to lower grade levels. Somehow, it gave me the training for today's session," said Reyes, an Economics major at De La Salle University.

Reyes said she was happy to share "a little of my blessings" with the children.

"I was very happy that the kids were responsive, attentive and very smart. I think the program is very noble. It helps a lot of children. Reading is very important. I hope they continue reading even by themselves," Reyes said.

EAGER participants listen to actress-model Li Reyes tell a story during the Read-Along session held at the Inquirer office on Pasong Tamo yesterday. NINO JESUS ORBETA

Adamson read "Si Ading Chenpenlia" by Fanusto Galmo, a story about a mother who struggles to find enough food and eventually realizes her mistake when one of her children encounters danger. Another story, "Chandelyer Chandelyer" by Eduardo Gonzalez, is about a hard-working domestic helper named Chandelyn and how she was cared for by the family she worked for when she fell ill. Both books were published by Adarna House.

"I like Ate Li's story about the origin of different races," said nine-year-old guitarist Sheila Mae Delgado. "It teaches that we should love whatever God has given us and be grateful for it," added the Grade 4 student from the Guadalupe Nuevo Elementary School (Elnes).

'Be content with what you have'

Twelve-year-old Valerie Bacalla also liked Reyes' story. "It teaches you to be content with what you have," said Bacalla, a Grade 6 pupil from the Guadalupe Nuevo Elementary School (Elnes).

"If you love someone, you should show it," said 13-year-old Jalil Dimar in Filipino, summarizing what he learned from the story "Aling Chiropeda at ang Sarayang Nalong Hagdan."

Asked how he was able to relate to it, Dimar said: "The story is about love for one's family. I show my love for my mother by working. I sell cell phone load-ings in Bachelor to help her earn money."

"You can see by the way the kids reacted that they really enjoyed the session," said Isabel Guerrero, a 12-year-old Barangay resident of Sitio-on Manila.

A Canadian, Children came to the country in June last year to study and has involved herself in various volunteer groups to teach Tagalizen, among other things. "The session was really interesting and entertaining, that's why it was fun," she said.

"It really inspires kids to read when they see celebrities doing so," said Ana Hontiveros-Baraquel, project leader of Inquirer Read-Along. Reading Center, who brought kids to the session. "It also helped that the accreditors were good and had good visual aids to show to the kids and hold their attention," she added.

Environment-friendly session

At last week's Read-Along, literary queen Solfet started the session with a song and action number about conserving water, planting trees, cleaning the environment and taking care of animals.

Han's read "Si Bakosan," a story about mangroves, the dangers of pollution and improper waste disposal. The story was written by Carley Llanilao, Reena Rut de Leon Sarmiento and children's writer Miss Astrid Tobias, and published by Adarna House and Save Earth Foundation.

Aguilar also read Lampara Books' "Ang Halimg Puno" by Richiel Bautista, a story about children joining forces with neighborhood animals to stop a logger from cutting down the last tree in their city.

The special Inquirer Read-Along session was the second of 20 sessions to be held in partnership with Miss Philippines-Earth to mark the program's 10th anniversary. The session was also sponsored by Stephens, Silang Instal- and Kratos. Storybooks from Lampara Books were given away as prizes.

Yesterday's session, hosted by Inquirer Libro editor in chief Clyde Jo Ty Wayne, was held in the Inquirer office with Hands On Manila, Ongdog Bonong Reading Center, Krazy Elems, Tiffbrains Shuffering Corp. and Gordon.

Inquirer reporters Leila Salaverria and Edson Tandoc hosted lunch for the kids.

Interviewers: Shaunnie Arnil Schulz Quezada, Inquirer Research

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Marine's biggest battle: Fighting for wife's life

By Ayin-Ada Cruz
Correspondent at Large

ON VALENTINE'S DAY THIS MARINE OFficer wishes he could give his wife more than just kisses, flowers and chocolates.

What Maj. Stephen Cabaeler, a member of Philippine Military Academy Class '98, wants for his wife Ellen is the assurance of a longer and fuller life.

To that end he would do anything, including make a public appeal for help.

On Sept. 28, 2009, Ellen, 30, was diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia (AML), a condition described as a "cancer of the myeloid line of blood cells, characterized by a rapid growth of abnormal white blood cells that accumulate in the bone marrow and interfere with the production of normal blood cells." AML is the most common acute leukemia affecting adults.

In the Philippines, many succumb to the disease because they cannot afford the costly chemotherapy.

"It was an unexpected as a typhoon in summer as the news showed any signs that she was harbouring these killer cells while doing survey around the mountains of Cordillera with the national geographic society," he said. It was a shock as she is very athletic, energizing and has a very positive outlook on life," Cabaeler said in an interview.

Ellen has undergone chemotherapy, the first cycle in October last year, which was the most painful for her as the withered from weight and hair loss.

"I witnessed all of Ellen's strength sapped away by the drugs that were supposed to kill the cancer cells. I was told that 80 percent of those who suffer from sepsis and bleeding end up dead, but by God's grace and mercy she came out of it only after 19 days of being in and out of her wits," Cabaeler said.

The second cycle of chemotherapy yielded encouraging results and Ellen got her dreaded hair back. The next treatment also yielded positive results that doctors said she was ready for a bone marrow transplant.

Mentally and emotionally the promise of the transplant was getting her the hope that she has been yearning for. Ellen is finally cancer free.

There is one major obstacle, though, for one of the procedures, says Dan Cabaeler or a soldier's salary earned at Fort—P1,000, 1,100.

"With her renewed and closer relationship w our Maker and the promise of the bone marrow transplant, she became more determined to fight back. I now hear her talk about the future again," said Cabaeler.

He said Ellen have three very young children.

As a Marine officer, Cabaeler survived many battles in central and southern Mindanao against the Abu Sayyaf and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, but the bravest on the art of warfare that he learned in the military somehow could not prepare him for what he says is the battle of his life—a battle for family, a battle for love.

Thus, he has asked an appeal for assistance from kind souls who may want to help him make Ellen's wish again.

"With all humility, I am making this appeal. Please help me keep the hope burning in my wife's heart. I need your help. My phone numbers are 09253655599 and 09088649447."

Cabaeler's devotion to his wife may not be the greatest love story ever told, but it certainly touches the heart, for it is very real, selfless and unconditional.

Jamby's Valentine for 'Ka Bel'

By Jerry E. Esplanada

IN FINLAND, IRAN AND MOST OF LATIN America, where it is called "Ystävänpäivä," "Enhedsgave" and "Dia del Amor y la Amistad," respectively, Valentine's Day is more about remembering friends, not just loved ones.

And Chel's friendly here first. Met in Alex Comsavilla Bentley" Madrigal plans to spend this 14 this year.

Ke Madrigal, an independent presidential candidate, and last French husband Eric Jean Claude Salado, "every day is Valentine's Day."

"But there are other people who have been part of my life as a legislator who are also worth remembering on Valentine's Day. Ka Bel is one of them," Madrigal told the business.

Ka Bel is the late labor leader and party-list Rep. Crispin Beltran, also one of the staunchest critics of the Arroyo administration.

Beltran, called the "Grand Old Man of Philippine Labor," was unionized with mass activism and practically everything having to do with the militant labor movement during the Marcos years until his death in 2006.

"Ka Bel is special in our because there are a few people who have his convictions. I had the chance to visit his home town (Barasoain) where I saw his humble beginnings," said Madrigal.

"That is why when he died, I went with his home and stood for four hours in a truck which carried his remains from Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City to his final resting place in Bulacan. That day I told myself this is the least tribute I can pay a man who fought the Marcos dictatorship and who really lived his ideals. I cried and was touched that many people lined the streets and gave the clenched-fist salute."

Madrigal's friendship with Beltran "started when I was a senator, when I began joining antigovernment rallies."

"It's no secret that my views are more progressive than any of my colleagues because I believe in empowering the grassroots and not empowering the rich and powerful. Otherwise, we cannot have real change in this country."

Sometime in the mid-1980s, Beltran began his career in the labor movement, serving as president of both the Yellow Taxi Mayor Union and the Amalgamated Taxi Drivers Federation.

In February 2006, he was implicated in an alleged plot to overthrow the Arroyo administration.

On May 20, 2008, Beltran died following a fall from the roof of his home in San José del Monte, Bulacan, while he had been repairing. He was 75.

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The Daily Gospel

Sunday February 14, 2010
6th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Jer 17:5-8

This is what Yahweh says, "Cursed is the man who trusts in human beings and depends on a mere fool for his life, while his heart is drawn away from Yahweh! He is like a bunch of thistles in dry land, in parched desert places, to a salt land where no one lives and who never finds happiness.

"Blessed is the man who puts his trust in Yahweh and whose confidence is in him! He is like a tree planted by the water, sending out its roots towards the stream.

"It has no fear when the heat comes, his leaves are always green; the year of drought is no problem and he can always bear fruit."

2nd Reading: 1 Cor 15:12, 16-20

If Christ is preached as risen from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

If the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is pointless and you remain still in sin. Also those who fall asleep in Christ are lost. If it is only for this life that we have hope in Christ, we are the most unfortunate of all people.

But no, Christ has been raised from the dead and he comes before all those who have fallen asleep.

Gospel: Lk 6:17, 20-26

Coming down, He [Jesus] with them, Jesus stood on a level place. Many of his disciples were there and a large crowd of people who had come from all parts of Judea and Jerusalem and from the coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon.

Then looking at his disciples, Jesus said, "Fortunate are you who are poor, the kingdom of God is yours.

Fortunate are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

Fortunate are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

Fortunate are you when people hate you, when they reject you and insult you and treat you as outcasts because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for a great reward is kept for you in heaven. Remember that is how the ancestors of this people treated the prophets.

But alas for you who have wealth, for you have had your consolation.

Alas for you who are full, for you will go hungry.

Alas for you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.

Alas for you when people speak well of you, for that is how the ancestors of these people treated the false prophets."

Commentary:

The kingdom of God will turn some to another way to look out... because the kingdom of God is within you."

His world changes
only when we change.
All become better for everyone
when we ourselves are living well.
The presence of God, for we are
channels on the presence of God
Jesus.

Warning out on Poland jobs

FILIPINO APPLICANTS FOR JOBS IN Poland should drink water before accepting an offer.

The Department of Foreign Affairs yesterday advised Poland-bound workers, particularly those recruited as "mushroom pickers," not to pressed there, citing many complaints of low wages and unfavorable working conditions.

"There are approximately 86 Filipino women currently deployed or working as mushroom pickers in Poland. The majority of these workers are not happy with their jobs due to very low wages, unfavorable working conditions and substandard accommodations," Philippine Ambassador to Poland Alejandro D. del Rosario said in a statement.

He said these workers were not directly employed by the mushroom companies but through a Polish recruitment agency that subcontracted their services. The mushroom company, therefore, is not concerned with the welfare of the workers, Del Rosario said.

Workers are paid on a per-kilo basis, which is dependent on the availability of mushrooms for picking and the orders received from customers. Rates per kilo also depend on whether the mushrooms is of first-, second- or third-class quality.

To offset, there is no fixed wage for a mushroom picker, with workers' monthly earnings ranging from $150 to $500, the ambassador said.

Some of the workers said they were promised $800 a month by the Polish recruitment firm but ended up with a net pay of only $380 a month.

Del Rosario said Undersecretary, a Welfare recruiting agency which works with Javier Manning based in Makati, Manila, were responsible for the plight of 19 mushroom pickers who walked out of their jobs because of unfair labor practices.

Cynthia D. Balana

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'Vulgar, immoral,' says Church of condom-giving with flowers

By Dona Pazcoguin

THE LOCAL CATHOLIC CHURCH has condemned as "immoral" and "vulgar" the Department of Health's Valentine's Day campaign to give free condoms to adult customers at a popular flower market in Manila to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus-Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

Bishops and giving customers free condoms for every purchase of flowers would only promote sexual promiscuity, especially among young people.

If it wants to arrest the alarming spread of HIV/AIDS in the country, the DOH would do better to help the Church's campaign for abstinence among the youth, the prelates said.

"It is vulgar; it is [cruel]; it is gross. To what extent would they entice young people to be promiscuous? How far are they willing to go in promoting illegitimate carnal relations?" Archbishop Ernesto Cruz-Cruz said in an interview.

"These people should realize that instead of preventing the spread of AIDS or HIV they are in effect promoting it by this gesture. Therefore, if the country has ever more victims of this sexually transmitted disease, then they know they have played a big part in it," he said.

Bishop Emeritus Teodoro Bacani Jr. doubted that Health Secretary Esperanza Cabral herself would give free grownup-sized children condoms and flowers to give to their boyfriends and girlfriends on Valentine's Day.

"Could she do that to her own children, even those loved and wondered? Isn't that despicable?" Bacani said.

"Is that the way to help prevent HIV-AIDS, or is that a way of encouraging promiscuity and illegitimate acts which is the cause of the increase in HIV-AIDS cases?" he added.

"They should not rush into doing something like that because that might even be the cause of a worsening situation if HIV-AIDS cases," he said.

Bacani said that a campaign for total abstinence would be more effective in combating the spread of HIV-AIDS than a "comprehensive sex education" campaign that would include the use of condoms and artificial contraceptives.

Dr. Ed Janairo, head of the DOH's National Center for Disease Prevention and Control, said the condom-giving campaign dubbed "Be Affektibo, Iligal Lagi" at the Dangwa Flower Market was meant to raise awareness for HIV-AIDS prevention and not for family planning.

He said the condoms were given for free by condom manufacturers.

Due to the Catholic Church "influence, the DOH in the Arroyo administration has stopped promoting artificial contraceptives for family planning.

HIV-AIDS campaigns focus on promoting behavior that realizes the risk of transmission, namely by using condoms, limiting the number of sexual partners and abstinence or delaying sexual debut among the young.

Cubao Bishop Honorio Ongtioco said condom-giving was an "immoral" solution to the problem of HIV-AIDS prevalence.

Parties vie to get election returns

By Kristine L. Alave

THE PARTIES OF THE LEADING presidential candidates are scrambling to be designated the dominant majority party in the 2010 polls in order to be allowed to claim four of the three eight copies of the election returns.

The Liberal Party (LP), which has Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III for its presidential candidate, the Nacionalista Party (NP), with Sen. Manuel Villar, and Puwersa ng Masang Pilipino (PMP) led by standard bearer Joseph Estrada, all asked the Commission on Elections to give them the mark copy of the election returns.

In separate petitions filed Friday, all three parties said they had a complete slate in the national races and candidates in local contests.

The administration party, Lakas-Kampi-CMD, with former Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro as its presidential candidate, was the only party that failed to be accredited as the dominant majority party, which would entitle it to the fifth copy of the election returns.

Under the automation law, the dominant majority and minority parties are allowed to secure a copy from the first eight election returns that would be printed out by the Precinct Count Optical Scan machines for their own audit. They would also get a copy of the certificate of canvass and would be allowed one watcher inside the precincts.

The NP, which also asked the Comelec to approve its coalition with the party headed by business tycoon Eduardo Cojuangco, the National People's Coalition, said the mark copy would "enable it one of the largest political groups in the country it said it had about 2,000 members seeking local and national elective positions.

The LP said it should be the dominant minority party because of its track record. It was reelected the nation in the 2007 elections.

The PMP argued that it had been the "bulwark" of the opposition. It claimed to have 1,346 candidates in the national and local polls.

MOTORCYCLE MANUFACTURERS AT RIDERS TUTOL SA RFID

Ang pamunuan ng Motorcycle Development Program Participants Association (MDPPA), isang samahan na kumakatawan ng 68% ng industriya ng motorsiklo sa bansa, kasama ng mga taper ng mga motorcycle riders ay nahiggit na binubulatan ang pagpapatupad ng RFID sa sumusunod na kadahilanan:

1. DUPLIKASYON LANG ITO NG MGA SISTEMANG UMIIRAL NA
Ang plaka ang siyang pinakamabisang identification ng motorsiklo. Higit sa lahat, ang isang motorsiklo ay pumapasilim sa napakaraming proseso at regulasyon di lamang ng LTO bagkus pati na ang Bureau of Customs at Environment Management Bureau upang mailyak na ang bawat isang unit na lumabas sa merkado ay may kaukulan at wastong rekord. Aming nakikita na ang layunin na tinutukoy ng RFID ay mabubuntan nanan sa iba pang pamamaraan katulad na lang ng mga sumusunod:

Kolorum - Ang motorsiklo ay pampribadong gamit maliban sa tricycle na kailangan ng prangkisa. Ang may humidlikyan o legal na pamamahala ng tricycle operation ay ang lokal na gobyerno na nakakasakop ng partikular na ruta nito. Di kailangang lagyan ng RFID tag ang lahat ng tricycle para mahuli ang mga kolorum. Kung sakali man, yung may prangkisa lang ang dapat mailagyan nito. Subalit kung mailagyan man ang mga ito, di rin maaaring ipetisyon ang pagsugpo sa mga kolorum kung di rin ipapatupad ang paghuli sa mga ito. Simple lang ang suhetyon, magsagawa ng surprise inspection sa mga pila ng tricycle at hanga ang dokumento ng prangkisa. Kausapin ang presidente ng association ng mga ito at tulungan ang pakikipaghuntingan sa pagpapatupad ng anti-colorum campaign.

Non-appearance sa Smoke Emission Test - Noong January 2007 nilunsad ng LTO-Stradcom ang PETC Interconnectivity (DOTC Department Order No. 2006-34 at 2005-37). Ang pangunahing layunin nito ay para matiyak daw na authentic ang mga Certificate of Emission Compliance (CEC). Ang pagpapa-approve ng smoke emission test results ay ginagawa on-line dahil habang kinakalkula ng results ang sasakyan ay sakdalin sa computers ng LTO Office na matapat dito ang mga datos nito. Iisipin pa nga ng LTO na magagamit ng webcam para matiyak na totoo na nanood ang sasakyan at para mawasan ang non-appearance. Para saan pa nga ba ang RFID tag kung ipapatupad lang ng mahigpit ang mga alituntunin ito?

Anti-carnapping campaign - Bukod sa POLICE HOTLINE 177 at PNP MOTOR VEHICLE HOTLINE 724-8989, ang INFO TEXT SERVICES ng LTO ay kailangan lang ng enhancements para maisama ang iba pang detalye na kailangan para ma-identify agad ang isang motor. Ipadala sa 2600 ang text message tulad ng sa sumusunod na format:

LTO_ VEHICLE_ <numero ng plaka ng sasakyan, walang espasyo>

2. ANG RFID TAG AY ISANG DISKRIMINASYON SA MGA NAGMOMOTOR
Di tulad ng mga kotse o sasakyang may apat o higit sa apat ang gulong, madaling palitan an LTO kung saan ilalagay ang RFID tag na safe, secured at tamper-proof sa mga motorsiklo sa kadahilanang ang motorsiklo ay bukas at nakalantad sa elements at klima. Kung di, masigurado ang tatlong isyung ito, magiging magastos sa mga nagmomotor ang pagkuno dito dahil kakailanganin na madalas na pagpalit ng tag. Sa halagang P350, napakalaggat nito kung pauhi-uhi na manunong o manuarakan ang tag na ito. Bukod dito, nangangamba ang mga motorcycle riders na pwede itong gamitang dahilan ng mga traffic enforcers para sa pagpapahinto ng mga checkpoint na hindi sanan kailangan na.

3. KAKULANGAN NG ISANG FIELD TESTING UPANG MALAMAN NA ANG RFID AY NAAAYON BA SA MGA KUNDISYONG PANG TRAPIKO SA PILIPINAS
Walang ginawang field testing sa Pilipinas upang malaman kung ang pagpapatupad ng RFID sa bansa ay naaayon sa kundisyon sa mga kalsada sa Pilipinas. Ang field testing na gagamitin nilang batayan sa pagpapatupad ng RFID ay ang field testing na ginawa sa ibang bansa. Ang aming pananawala ay dapat magkaroon ng field testing dito sa Pilipinas upang malaman kung talagang maaari nating ipatupad ang nasabing proyekto sa mga lansangan sa ating bansa.

Hinihiling ng motorcycle manufacturers at riders ang tuluyang pagpapatigil sa proyektong RFID. Mahigpit at matigting na pagpapatupad ng mga sobrantang umiiral na ang siyang lunas sa mga problemang ibig lutasin ng LTO. Ang kailangan ng industriya ng pagmomotor ay isang maliwag, pulos at simpleng alituntunin na sasagot sa kaiukalanan ng mga nagmomotor.

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155 RP soldiers fly to Haiti

By Marlon Ramos

DESPITE THE DEATH OF THREE of their comrades in Haiti last month, 155 soldiers crossed the Pacific to the quake-hit Caribbean nation as members of the latest batch of the United Nations peacekeeping force.

Lt. Col. Romeo Brawner, Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesperson, said another 115 Filipino peacekeepers were deployed to strife-torn Liberia in West Africa.

He said the AFP peacekeeping units left the country on chartered flights provided by the United Nations.

Continuous process

"The dispatch of Filipino peacekeepers to other countries is a continuous process. It's one commitment in a UN member nation," Brawner said in a phone interview.

Speaking at yesterday's send-off rites at the Sheridan Hangar at Clark Air Base, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Victor Ernesto told the Filipino peacekeepers to continue the gallantry of AFP personnel assigned in some of the most dangerous places in the world.

"May you carry on the good job of our fellow soldiers in Haiti. The untimely death of our three soldiers should not dishearten you, but encourage you to serve better," Brawner said, quoting Ernesto.

Members of the 11th Filipino Peacekeeping Mission in Haiti will replace the AFP contingent that led massive missions in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince after surviving the 7.0-magnitude earthquake on Jan. 12.

Three AFP peacekeepers—Navy Duke Prosecute 3 Pearly Panangui, Army Sgt. Fantastic Bermudez and Air Force Sgt. Jimalex Amarante—died after they were trapped under the rubble when a killer quake toppled the hospital in which the UN headquarters in Port-au-Prince.

Another Filipino UN staff member, Jerome Yap, was also buried underneath the ruins.

Their bodies were recovered several days after the earthquake and were flown back to Manila two weeks ago.

Peacekeeping missions

Brawner said there were over 600 Filipino soldiers assigned to peacekeeping missions in the Golan Heights in Israel as well as in Ivory Coast and East Timor.

In addition to clerical work, he said UN peacekeepers were usually assigned to combat and patrol operations.

"The Philippine contingent had also initiated civil-military operations such as medical missions. Lately peacekeepers from other nations have been copying our mission," Brawner said.

He said Filipino soldiers deployed as UN peacekeepers undergo the AFP's stringent physical and written exams aside from the regular tests administered by the UN.

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Polls, economy seen boosting tour industry

By Kristine L. Alave

THE RECOVERY OF THE WORLD ECONOMY and the May 10 national elections will boost the local tourism industry in 2010, an industry group said.

Ms. Pat Alberto, president of the Philippine Travel Agencies Association (PTAA), projected more travelers would come in the Philippines this year as the economic recovery continues.

Alberto noted that the upbeat outlook was helped by cheap airfares and strong local demand noted in the first half of the year due to the election and vacation seasons.

The election alone would increase by 15 percent the volume of domestic travels "because of the campaign entries," Alberto said. The industry also foresees strong ticket sales after the polls. "Departures for abroad also go up after elections," she said.

Alberto said this was due to the fact that those who were involved in the campaigns would go on vacation.

Jojo Clemente, chair of the Travel Tour Expo to be conducted by the PTAA next week at SMX, said the industry hoped the elections, which will ostensibly mark the local season, would be peaceful.

"We are also hoping the elections will be a convenient cuddle in the past," he said.

He noted that there was great interest in the Philippines, but this was dampened by reports of typhoons and violence in the latter half of 2009.

Clemente said the Magindanao massacre last year in Mindanao, which made headlines worldwide, caused a serious drop in tourists in Mindanao.

The ARMM area also discouraged plenty of entertainment and industrial investing, the group said.

But Clemente noted that the Philippines was still known for its friendliness and its laid-back nature.

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Fraud raps lodged against comic's wife

By Julie H. Aurelio

CLEARED LAST WEEK FROM A similar charge in a Quezon City court, the wife of a TV comedian who allegedly issued more than P200,000 in bad checks is now charged of fraud in 2008.

Three counts of violation of Batas Pambansa 22 or the Anti-Bouncing Check Law were lodged against Jennilyn Mateo, wife of comedian Jose Mateo, in the Quezon City Metropolitan Trial Court.

Mateo is also facing one count of estafa in the Quezon City Regional Trial Court on both charges were based on a complaint by Purificacion Nayve who Mateo dealt with in 2008.

In separate informations, assistant city prosecutor Veronica Pegarum saw merit in Nayve's complaint as she found probable cause to charge Mateo in court.

In a four-page resolution, Pegarum explained that even as Nayve's daughter Gladys Nayve-Dumarao filed a motion to dismiss the complaint and entered into a compromise with Mateo, the act was not "legally binding" as Dumarao acted "without authority."

The prosecutor pointed out that Dumarao, though given a special power of attorney, "was not authorized to initiate such an agreement as the SPA specified that Dumarao could only enter into a settlement in a case that she herself had filed."

It was Nayve and not Dumarao who filed the case, Pegarum said.

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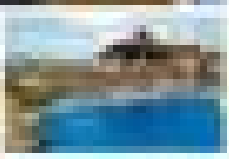

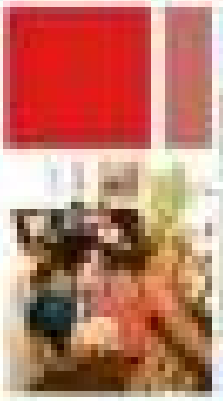

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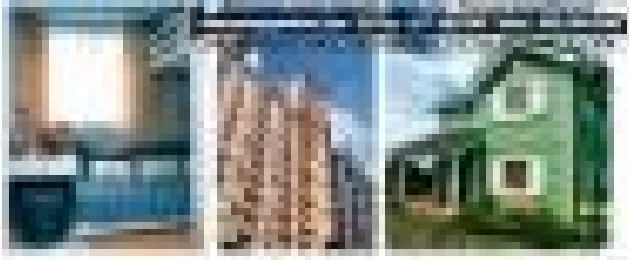

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INQUIRER

OPINION

The purge

THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS HAS OUSTED Sid Pandilla from the governorship of Pampanga, and in his place will now sit, for a mere three months, Lilia Pineda. Pineda, who once accused Pandilla of fraud and terrorism, has had to settle for—as Comelec Commissioner Nicodemo Ferrer put it—a "re-appreciation" of the ballots, which involved the counting of ballots that listed her nickname. It is therefore possible that Pineda would be holding the levers of provincial power as the fight Pandilla, again, for the gubernatorial post.

EDITORIAL

We can be sure that the Arroyo-Pineda-Lapid coalition, after having endured the shock of a grass-roots rebellion in 2007, will give everything in its power to wrest back the governorship of Pampanga by putting up an appearance of a solid, united front.

The political math involved in Pandilla's 2007 victory was simple. The two political kingpins of the province, the Lapids and the Pinedas, squabbled so much and contested the election so fiercely that they allowed an unorganized, ill-chosen reform candidate to squeak through. The third person in Pampanga's political trinity—President Macapagal-Arroyo—would later find herself in a fix after Pandilla exposed the distribution, following a Palace meeting, of cash-filled paper bags to local officials.

Since late September, the Comelec had been postponing its announcement of the decision ousting Pandilla. (It's not like the Comelec can't count; it only takes its time doing accounts and hands down its decisions with curiously good timing for those allied with the administration.) The decision on Pandilla's ouster came from its Second Division, which is headed by the pious yet controversial Ferrer who has been reprimanded thrice by the Supreme Court. (Read who can ever forget reports about Ferrer's being part of 'Bali Porte Magdalenaso?') Ferrer has been negatively in the news since mid-2007—in connection with the attempt to disqualify Mayor Jose Bolivar Jr. of Naga City and with the Lisuning Bedol brouhaha in Maguindanao.

This is the same Second Division that disapproved the Maguindanao application for party-list status but allowed several former politicians to run for office. It disapproved Ang Ladlad with Bible-thumping bigotry but approved the candidacy of convicted plunderer Joseph Estrada for the presidency. It allowed the candidacy of President Arroyo for the House, and has pegged the country of three governors—Grace Padaca of Isabela, Josélito Mendoza of Batanes, and now Pandilla of Pampanga, all of whom happen to belong to the same political party, representing similar reform constituencies, and rose to power in defiance of entrenched provincial political overlords.

The public reaction to the decision—widespread disbelief combined with the suspicion that Comelec decisions are made with political timing in mind—may or may not have genuine basis. It's true, the perception may apply only to the controversial Second Division in the one bad egg in the Comelec basket; or the decision could be seen as part of a "bad rap, good rap" act. Whichever, this only goes to show how low the Comelec has sunk in the public eye, and this subterranean reputation bodes ill for the credibility of the 2010 polls.

Which only underscores the necessity for the Comelec to resolve such cases more expeditiously in the future. If we assume that the governors ousted from office didn't deserve to sit there in the first place, the delayed decisions could only be a patent injustice to the actual winners who would sit in office for just a few months of their terms, as well as to their constituencies. It is manifestly equally unjust if the ousted were deprived of the terms due them by majority mandates.

It remains to be seen if the new ballot forms and counting methods would lead to credible local elections, and if future protests would be resolved in a quicker and less controversial manner. All we can hope for now is that when Ferrer retires from the Comelec in February 2013, whoever is the next president, he would select someone less controversial for the job.

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The vice presidentials

SEPARATE OPINION

Raguel A. Cruz

TO AVOID A REPETITION OF THE TIE BETWEEN Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr for the presidency in 1793, the winning presidential candidate in the United States now carries with him the victory of his running mate to qualify as the latter's running mate. Thus, President Barack Hussein Obama's decision to pick a 12-year-old schoolgirl who demonstrated on the blackboard that "potato" was spelled without an "e," President Sarah Palin's had resulted.

The vice presidential candidate does not have to rely on that sorter and the wrong person on the other partner. Thus, first, Nilgando Angara saw the vice presidential contest to Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo although his partner was ex-President Joseph Estrada for his easy victory.

Today, it's different. Although the presidential candidate endorses his official vice presidential partner, each of them must invariably campaign separately and not as a team. The basis of his own showing. Sen. Joseph Ejercito was a vice presidential candidate on his own rights because he obtained more votes for the said office than Sarah Palin of the Republican Party.

It is important for us to understand this rule, for, look what happened to Mr. Arroyo and needed friends and not his running mate in 2001. Perhaps we wouldn't have so many troubles as we have now had we chosen someone like Joe Biden. So let's consider those few words about our presidentiables.

The best known of the present vice presidential candidates is Mar Roxas who, perhaps, should have been a presidential candidate himself. He is presentable, comes from a successful family, and carries a respectable education. He is welcomed by his colleagues in Congress. I regret that he quit his quest for the presidency early in the game because of how political surveys which I am sure would improve later.

He quit the presidential race and instead installed Senator Aquino himself to seek the highest office. Noynoy agreed to run but with that as his running mate. Mar gamely accepted and is now considered among the most probable vice presidential candidates.

Senator Bonoy is president of the recently revived Liberal Party, which was established in 1946 as a result of the Osmeña-Roxas presidential fight that year. The Roxas who won that fight between the two statesmen was Senator President Manuel A. Roxas, founder of the Liberal Party and grandfather of its present president.

Almost equal in popularity is former Secretary Leguela who served many years in the Senate and only as a senator until he was picked by President Corazon Aquino to be Secretary of Justice and has since been in the private practice of law in Holland. During the last Congress, she helped this solons unanimously secure approval of the recommendation for the prosecution of Sen. Ping Lacson for several crimes allegedly committed by office. She later abandoned the office to make the agenda to be running mate to the popular Bernardo Bar Jr.

Sonia Roy's sudden death in 2009 and the irregularities suggested by the Gani report and other irregularities in that election, Leguela could have been the president of the Philippines today and not just a plain senator.

History would be a serious virtue as long as it is applied by Aquino Jesse to his lifelong friend, former President Estrada, and his faithful residents and neighbors whom he has served for several terms as mayor of Makati and then Senator. It is difficult to believe that such neighbors will ultimately translate to affection of the whole nation for his old frog.

Jejo is an efficient vice governor but I doubt if that talent could serve the whole Philippines. Could be, for example, give free cinema tickets to every one living not only in Makati but anywhere in the whole territory of our country, including Clark Field?

I'm running short of space for the other candidates for the office of vice president but I feel I must mention at least a few words about the running mate of Gilbert "Gibo" Teodoro. His name is Edu Manzano. I have never heard him deliver a speech, even for 15 sec. So there.

Despite what I might have described as the affection between the president and vice president, there is hardly such sentiment in their work schedule. With possible exception, consider the relationship between GMA and Noynoy when the latter was DILG. The President offered him various work in the government which he declined, preferring to work in his own time supervising the completion of his PNO million mansion at Dasmariñas Village.

Finally, my apologies to Dick Gordon, Nick Perlas and J.C. de los Reyes for not including them in this article about their former and present vice presidentiables. My fault. They are probably better candidates than their principals except that they don't have the technique to be presidents of the Philippines.

Opium or vitamins?

MOMENTS

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

THE STORY IS TOLD ABOUT A FILIPINO IN America who, due to his illegal status, was always hiding ("DH," meaning "legs in tags"). He found work but he had to clean up as a chauffeur in a car wash. One day a big guy in his hotel saw him and gave him a big guest. Whereupon he pleaded, "Huwag po. Obrero lang po ako."

The guy in the car whispered, "Shut up before we both lose our jobs. I'm also a Pinoy DH!"

* * *

In today's Gospel (Lk. 6, 17. 20-26) Jesus gives "The Beatitudes" and His message of hope to the poor, the hungry, the weeping and the persecuted. It is still a powerful message in these our days and times, especially for the hidden, the sickonese, the contrived and the bypassed. He used The Beatitudes to give us consolation and hope.

* * *

It is wrong to look at The Beatitudes simply as a source of personal consolation. The Beatitudes, also known as "The Sermon on the Mount," should empower us to go down from the mountain and face our harsh realities bravely. Filled with hope and consolation, we must go and spread this message to others too. Furthermore, The Beatitudes should lead us not only to accept but also to empower our situation.

* * *

It is not enough to accept that the poor are blessed. We should also ask: Why are people poor? Why are people hungry? Why are people weeping? Why are people persecuted? In other words, The Beatitudes are powerful "to activate" that should lead us to action for a better world. Instead of just being an opium, The Beatitudes should be seen as vitamins to give us strength to fight injustice, falsehood, manipulation and evil in whatever form.

* * *

If Jesus had The Beatitudes, the politicians have their "ten amendes." In effect, they are saying: "Elect me, and I will solve all your woes and problems!" They promote themselves as the hope of the poor because they themselves are poor etc., etc. In the end, we end up with a bunch of selfish, ungrateful, proud and arrogant "public servants" who are neither for the public nor public servants.

* * *

Let us be aware of false prophets who tell us what we want to hear, not what we need to hear. The Beatitudes should lead us to be anxious, to be persistent and to be uncompromising in our search for truth, justice and righteousness—in short, to be impatient—in our political, social and economic situation.

* * *

Do a more personal note, today is Valentine's Day, the day of hearts, so remind us that mothers of the heart do and still do matter. The harsh realities and pressures of modern life should not anesthetize we make us cynical about love. A good question to ask ourselves today is: Is there enough love in my life? Are there people who really love me? Am I really loving other people aside from myself and my ownbody?

* * *

Another very important question to ask ourselves today is: Is God, the heart of all hearts, the source of all love, present in my life and in my heart? Those who put aside someone greater than ourselves do take a lot in life. May we not be too focused on what we hold in our hands, in our hands and in our pockets such that we forget what is in our hearts.

* * *

"Kung Hei Fat Choi!" Happy Chinese New Year! Fresh start. New beginnings. Every new year should make us remember, rejoice and renew, and give us the resolve to make it a better year than last year, in all aspects. Amen!

* * *

This Wednesday, Feb. 17, is Ash Wednesday, a day of fasting and abstinence, the beginning of Lent. On this day, we are reminded that from dust we came, to dust we will return. "Repent and believe in the Gospel!" tells us it is time to turn away from sin and come to God sincerely. The journey is not about going far and fast. The journey is going to the heart—to God's heart, to people's hearts and to our own hearts. (By the way fasting is required from ages 18-60. Abstinence is from 14 onwards.)

* * *

True fasting and abstinence should lead us closer to God and to our people. Cutting our worldly appetites and desires should make us focus more on the divine. Empowering deprivations should make us feel in solidarity with the poor and the little ones in our midst. And whatever money we save as a result of our Lenten discipline should be given to those in need.

* * *

Lent should remind us that life is just lent to us. All worldly prowess and riches for that matter are temporary and passing. Conversion is simply shifting from a what-am-I getting attitude to a what-can-I-giving attitude. It is dethroning the "I" from the center and giving space for the "UR," and embracing The Divine in our lives.

* * *

Inviting you to a true pilgrimage to Norway and Cambodia this March 2 to 8. For more details, please call 5338240 or 88, 5214165 or 7217452.

* * *

A beautiful prayer for the season: "God, I need you. Earth me when I am weak; hold me when I am tired; love me when I cannot care anymore; embrace me when I am lonely; smile at me when I fail. Amen."

* * *

A statement with the Lord:

Lord today The Beatitudes be not just an opium but a vitamin for my life and ground. Amen.

Justice and love on Valentine's Day

WITH DUE RESPECT

Artemio V. Panganiban

AWED AND MESMERIZED. THAT'S HOW I FELT as I addressed the Asemic Second National Congress of the Clergy. I am used to hearing priests deliver homilies, but not to talking before 5,000 cardinals, archbishops, bishops and priests. I was asked to relate the juristic duty of dispensing justice to the priestly work of spreading God's love. The priests who asked for copies of my sharing may access it at cjpanganiban.ph. However, to celebrate Valentine's Day (and, On next New Year), I have written this summary:

Three days before, I visited our Supreme Court for over 11 years until I retired as chief justice three years ago. One of my most unforgettable experiences as a jurist was my visit to the national penitentiary in Muntinlupa. Our Security Department advised against the visit; the inmates could become unruly; after all, I was many of them to jail.

However, I decided to go, after interviewing Fely Mesa (a friend) who visited the Correctional Institution 21. This Gospel says about our Lord asking whether his disciples visited him when he was in prison. So I told myself, better to risk the ire of the inmates than to incur the ire of the Lord!

I was pleasantly surprised at the three tiers of the penitentiary. I expected to see the usual scenes of land planted with fruit trees and shrubs. True, there was the imposing white building housing the maximum-security inmates. But there too was a vast tract of land around this concrete behemoth.

I was ushered to considerably large rooms on the ground floor, outside the forbidding building where some 500 inmates were seated. When I arrived they thundered into applause while their hand played "Bahinday" and the Philippine National Anthem. I was genuinely entertained with their talent shows, especially the comedy skit about life in jail, as well as their folk dances, hip-hops and solo numbers rendering Frank Sinatra, Air James and Celine Dion.

Hope in prison. In my address to the inmates, I spoke boldly of hope, saying that lives have many evident their movements and may subject them to emotions and attitude. Nonetheless, they should not lose the world and lose their faith.

Almost everyone is in some kind of prison. Many rich people are imprisoned by their greed. They never allow generous thoughts and deeds to be motivated by sociable illnesses, like economic envy, that keep them in pain all day and all night. Some, like the mentally ill and the feeble-minded, are imprisoned by their minds.

So, those held behind bars have hope because one day they would have finished serving their sentences and would be freed. In fact, with good behavior, their sentences could be commuted or pardoned. But those imprisoned by greed or by their inner bodies could be condemned to pain and suffering all their lives.

As I was leaving, an inmate asked in Filipino (translated literally into English): "Isn't it true that all the commandments of the Lord can be summed up in one sentence, 'Love God and love your fellow beings'? Why then did you have to imprison me? Granted that with the way our Church treats sinners, after confessing my sins, the priest merely recommends me, then asked me to pray the rosary and forgave me. In the name of love, why can't you just follow my confessor's example? Isn't love forgiveness with the punishment you imposed on me?"

As I answered back home, these questions kept me thinking. Isn't our God's God of love first and foremost? Why then should I, a supposed follower of Jesus Christ, take pride in my work of imposing penalties? Is my career of dispensing justice counter-divine to the Lord's commandment of love?

My search for an answer led me back to Matthew 25. There, the Lord was judging his people. Those who did not give food to the hungry, did not give drink to the thirsty, did not clothe the naked, did not visit the sick and the imprisoned, He condemned to "eternal punishment"; and those who did, He brought to "eternal life." See, the Lord was not making choices because he was the Lord of justice just as He was also the Lord of love.

A young lady's tale. To make my sharing on justice and love easy to remember, I ended with an anecdote. A policeman brought a young lady to a judge. "Young lady," bathed His Honor, "this officer told me you were blasting at 100 kilometers per hour on Ayala Avenue. What can you say about that?"

"Your Honor," replied the lady, "The policeman is correct. I violated the law. I am deeply sorry. I promise to refrain myself. It will not happen again. Please forgive me."

The judge banged his gavel and ruled, "I fine you P500 for violating the law." Then, he removed his robe, went to the cashier, pulled out his wallet and paid the fine of P500. Why did he do that? Because the young, repentant lady who promised to reform her life was his daughter.

The judge had to follow the law and punish the traffic violator. He had to be justice for done though the heavens may fall. But because he loved his daughter, he paid the fine with his own money.

And so it is with our Father in heaven. He is both the Lord of justice and the Lord of love. Because He is the judge, He must condemn and punish sin. But He had to render justice and punish them. But because they are His children whom He loved dearly, He sent his only Son to redeem them and save them from their follies, out of His own grace and volition, not out of their worthiness or good deeds. Our Father is heaven to both the Lord of justice and the Lord of love. So must His priests in His Church. So must his magistrates in the service.

* * *

Comments are welcome at dbo@inquirer.net.ph; bun@hotmail.com

Showing our 'love'

AT LARGE

Nina Gonzalez-David

IT SEEMS LITTLE STRANGE HOW THE MILitary considers transporting the "Morong 43" from Camp Capinpin to Camp Tomas del Rosario, Tanay, only 100 kilometers away, until they find time to squeeze a unit of balikan corpus, while it took such risks for granted when they arrested the 43 in Morong and trucked them to detention in the Tanay camp.

If there was a risk that the alleged armed communists of the arrested health workers would escape in free them, wouldn't it have been better timed while they were being brought to the camp for interrogation, rather than while they were being brought to court where they would face their families and lawyers?

At least in this case, like the statement of Col. Ino, who bluished is merely a bit for time, while the military pushes its affidavits together and "pulls out" the necessary evidence. At worst, it is making our deception and rightful one government agency's (the military) arrogant definition of another branch's (the judiciary).

The Supreme Court had issued the writ at the behest of the families of the 43 health workers, who were undergoing training in a rural house in Morong owned by a retired Justice and faculty member of the UP College of Medicine. Accounts of the incident say that, after the writ of habeas corpus was served, the military refused to allow the interrogation under duress. Being questioned while they were blindfolded, and being held incommunicado for at least two days after the military troops swooped down on their sentence.

SEN. Lacuna Blackgod's statement that the arrest of the 43 health workers seems but part of a "disruption" on individuals suspected of being allied with "left-leaning" groups bears looking into. The timing is suspicious as well, occurring as it did on the eve of the start of the official campaign period when political parties and parties' affiliates are focused on the hustings.

Sen. Loren Legarda, MP vice presidential candidate and chair of the Senate committee on health, was right in hearing attention on the role that hung-gong health workers (HWWs) play in the health system. Unlike volunteers, the HWWs are the frontliners of the health de-

livery system, trained and often are recognized, standing out to people even in the most remote areas, and bringing them to rural health units for consultations and treatment. As well, they conduct community learning on the most basic preventive health measures, and grab down and monitor pregnant women, newly delivered mothers and their babies, tuberculosis patients and others in need.

In the course of their work among the remote, health workers often fall under suspicion, especially those pastoral-looking military and police who cannot vote the issue of ordinary folk and are thus suspicious of anyone who enjoys their confidence. Because they also work to organize and empower communities to manage their own health and survival needs, health workers are also often suspected of being in cahoots with communist rebels.

For all their work for and on behalf of the poorest citizens, this is the thanks that health workers get—suspicion, manipulation and outright harassment and arrest. What a way to show them our "love."

* * *

YOU could do worse celebrating this day by watching "Valentine's Day," the all-star ensemble movie that tells the interlaced tales of hopelessness on this Day of Hearts.

While I first saw the trailer, I felt an instant antipathy, suspecting that it would turn out to be a "Hollywood read" version of "Love, Actually" that tells the intertwined tales of Londoners around Christmastime.

I was right, actually. In fact, many of the stories in "Valentine's Day" bear an uncanny resemblance to those in "Love, Actually," including that of the feminist motherless boy, the betrayed lover, the cynical executive. The only difference is that while the British productive was witty and touching and heartwarming, the American version is just another one-up appeal and the performance of its cast that once drove even the most tame of scripts.

Still, "Valentine's Day" is serviceable as far as most rom-coms go, and would be the perfect date movie for those who can't afford the usual exotic all dinner and Broadway play and steal a fit. Be whooped afterwards. But don't bank on this harmless fluff of a movie to transform your typical date into a tender romantic. You would be well-advised to rely on the British version instead.

* * *

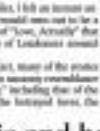
TWO other movies worth your time this cold lyrical weekend:

"Invictus" is not a romantic movie at all, at least in the key meets-girl sense, but if your idea of romance is reading shoulder and a reflection on the quality of friendship, then this is the movie of the season. "Invictus" tells the story of how Nelson Mandela, whose election as president of South Africa marked a genuine turning point in world history, sought to unite his fractured country "hungry for greatness." His chosen tactic: a South African victory in the Rugby World Cup. The movie is a hugely white exercise of soulmongo to eventual greatness is the story that is told, but the lessons for Filipinos—about giving new meanings to old symbols, about defying the worst expectations of both friend and foe—abound on the film.

"Precious: Based on the Novel 'Push'" is based on a series of juvenile novels that took to make Greek mythology accessible to young people, by way of the hero who's a teenager coping with dyslexia and ADHD and living in New York and who discovers that not only is he a demi-god, the son of Poseidon, but also that he belongs in a parallel world of titans and gods, monsters and magical creatures.

The movie does a good job of re-creating Percy's Olympia, and I love the way Greek mythology is transplanted into contemporary settings, such as placing the Land of the Lotus Eaters in Las Vegas, and Hades in Hollywood.

The Greek crisis and beyond



WORLD VIEW

Jan Brenner and Jon Levy

NEW YORK—AS EURO ZONE LEADERS FACE growing uncertainty in financial markets about the public finances of Greece and other member countries, their statements, albeit somewhat vague, underscore a much larger story—one that will have firms and investors to position their investments about Europe's economic, financial and political environment.

Let's first get rid of a powerful emerging myth. Greece's troubles have encouraged some to wonder aloud if the euro came on system to growing structural imbalances. But such doubts ignore the political and cultural factors that bolster a deep European commitment to preserve the monetary union.

The euro was created purely in order to bolster internal market efficiency and prevent currency volatility. But it is also the product of a deep cultural European conviction that transnational institutions and economic interdependence have helped maintain and consolidate peace on the continent for the past six decades. In a world of weak multilateral institutions—including a G20 beset by substantial differences of opinion on basic questions—it is more important than ever that euro-zone governments bolster their collective clout in an uncertain, unprecedented and complex global environment.

For member states, the euro zone is simply too important to fail. That means that solutions to the many problems they now face will require adjustment to the way each of them runs and spends. This is not government in the strict. The result will be more a process—a never-ending problem during Europe's multi-decade drive for internal currency stability. This divergence on fiscal policy has many causes, and no single shock will alter it.

These shifts will be gradual, persistent and less predictable than what investors had come to expect during the pre-crisis calm of the past few decades, when the currency union's establishment, together with EU enlargement and liberalization, appeared to create a stable and benign environment.

Finally, remarkable and lasting policy shifts will not be limited to countries in immediate financial trouble. German fiscal policy could soon look very different from the zero deficit bias that prevailed under the grand coalition that governed from 2005 until 2009. Having that period, the deficit reduction targets within both the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats made common cause to fend off pressures from other factions within their respective parties for a change in policy.

That structure is no more. Today the right wants tax cuts and the left, more economic stimulus. The two camps can't agree on anything. So can be. Items that increase is at risk of default, but investors overlook this sort of policy shift at their own risk. After all, a significant change in policy direction within the euro zone's biggest economy would have a much larger effect on the currency union than developments in Greece.

Over the longer term, the euro zone's spending, maybe Germany, not Greece, will become the euro zone's first country to see a government fall.

Project Syndicate

Jan Brenner is president of Eurasia Group and author of the forthcoming book "The End of the Free Market: Who Wins the War Between States and Corporations." Jon Levy is a Europe analyst at Eurasia Group.

Torture

WHEN THE MILITARY STORMED INTO THE PROPERTY OF Dr. Merlita Velasquez at six in the morning of Feb. 6, 2010, it had a force of 300 strong. Conservative reports put it a hundred. There were four six-by-six trucks, a military tank, and two police jeeps. The men in uniform ordered the gates opened at gunpoint. They did not identify themselves. They did not announce their purpose.

There locked inside, says Velasquez, a professor emeritus at the University of the Philippines School of Medicine: "Fear handed heavily around me, with one woman for the arrest of an alleged NPA rebel named Maria Corales.

METHOD TO MADNESS

Patricia Evangelista

When the men in uniform rode out of the Velasquez property, they had with them 43 confiscated blindfolded prisoners. None of them was named Maria Corales.

Lt. Col. Noel Detoyato, spokesperson of the Army's 2nd Infantry Division, said those arrested were raiding New People's Army leaders. "We have been conducting surveillance operations against that group. We are sure that those persons were really members of the NPA."

Detoyato's certainty is in conflict with the behavior of the gentlemen of the 203rd Infantry Battalion. The 43 captives were interrogated, asked again and again to admit their affiliations with the NPA. On Thursday, six days after the raid, the military claimed it had five new warrants of arrest...because one of the 43 escaped.

It is odd, only confounding are we tried if Detoyato's evidence is so clear. Odder still that those warrants were not served on logic 6.

According to 62-year-old Dr. Merla Montes, he and the other detainees were woken up in the night to be interrogated. His wife, Evelyn, says her husband told her of the electric fan adjusted to his head, sending shocks through his body when his answers failed to please his interrogators. Montes says they brought him outside, cuffed and blindfolded, tied to a chair, and jabbed at his chest with sharp objects. And then he would shout himself backward, backward, away from the shocks, his hooked into a circuit of water. Twice this happened to him, twice he found himself under water, half-drowning and blind.

The military does not deny the cuffing or blindfolding. In chapter says it was necessary in the investigation. The blindfolds stayed on for 36 hours.

Two fact-finding missions led by retired Justice of the Philippines Cecilia C. Muñoz Palma, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's chief, also Shauren, in 20 years old, with a second year high school education from Damaga high school. The militant says she at the head incidental of the Alliyo provincial committee. It is rumored the military means to the NPA.

Glenda does not know if she was really pregnant when she came in custody. Brought before Camp Capinpin, she only knows that her period had been delayed for weeks by the time she was arrested.

It happened on the second day after the arrest. Blood, pouring out from between her legs. It lasted a long time. Three nights have been chunks of flesh, or those night one. She was bleeding. Glenda says she was given a blue cotton cut of her body then. They never took off the blindfold. She is grateful they unlocked her cuffs long enough for her to wash herself. The others were forced to wait for a guard to take the trouble.

The military doctor who saw her the next day said she was not pregnant and it was normal for her to menstruate. Later, her said, Glenda ate on or not in a published room with on other women. The purple polish on her toenails is chipped. Her eyes dart; her hands clench and unclench. Friends still don't see her period.

The NPA and its men are not its intent to deprive the dominion of communist hope it is necessary to speculate how it is possible to accidentally rebuke a 27-year-old woman named Mary Cattle her right to an attorney.

According to the military library Ishan Castro, alias Maria Mercedes Ishan Castro, a graduate from Ateneo Sevilla High School, is a member of the Center for Health and Development. In the military's version, Castro was with all the girls given nothing over the bars. She smiles and smiles, that Mercy like smiles even when she says she is tired. They told her to be grateful she was alive. They ignored her requests for counsel. They told her it was her fault she was where she was. They said they would deactivate to the dark, behind her blindfold, she could not tell who was speaking to her. They told her to be pretty. There were with all the questions. They told her how they wanted to pinch her, kiss her. When she went to the bathroom with a female guard, she could hear men speaking around her. She worries about what they saw when a woman guard pulled down her panties.

The punishment in unofficial: tell us those acts criminals, high-risk prisoners, and terrorists. They tell us to lie. to believe them, even as Montes denies the red marks on his chest and the lines on his wrists.

The military says it found guns and explosives. It says seven of those people were part of a raid in San Mateo.

It is possible the military is correct; it is also possible it is not. There were witnesses that morning of Feb. 6 when the soldiers came in with their whole tanks to find explosives under beds. It is possible these 43 are members of the NPA. It is possible they were making bombs; it is possible they were conspiring against the nation. It is possible all 43 of them were responsible for the Fall of Saigon, the assassination of Ninoy Aquino, and the Ampatuan Massacre. It is possible. It is not matter what is possible. It does not even matter what is true. What matters is that 43 men and women were tortured by the gentlemen of the Armed Forces and denied their rights as citizens.

The government considers only so many ties to the insurgents to read likes and learn the patterns of battle. It considers it the cost of those who resist their hands with stolen guns. It is because of days like last Saturday among and bright, when it is made patently clear that there is no law, that those who carry guns believe themselves above it, judge and jury, for God and country it is because of men like Col. Josefito Belardo of the 203rd Brigade, who stood in the Court of Appeals last Friday, casually defying the Supreme Court's writ of habeas corpus. It is for unreasonable to believe that the military's treatment of the "Morong 43" may have resulted more 698 rebels than the mountains than any seminar held in Baguio. It is why the 600 will fail, again and again, to see success in their counter-rebellion.

This is what a democracy is at its most basic: one man's right to wipe his own's—I think his own set, instead of waiting for a uniformed guard to take the trouble. The gentlemen who stand for democracy need to remember that without their point and sit by six trades, they are as vulnerable as anyone else.

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TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to: jsarmiento@inquirer.com.ph

John Jason V. Sarmiento Jr.

Rana arvalis

YEAR OF BIODIVERSITY

Saving Philippine frogs

By Arvin C. Diesmos, Mae Lenor L. Diesmos and Rafe M. Brown

1 HOW IMPORTANT ARE FROGS IN THE ECOSYSTEM AND IN THE WEB OF LIFE?

Frogs are an excellent indicator of environmental health. One explanation is that the skin of amphibians is semi-permeable, hence is very sensitive to the environment. Amphibians can "breathe" and "drink" through their skin, obtaining oxygen and water from their surroundings. Therefore, polluted environments can directly affect them.

Another explanation is that most species of frogs undergo two phases in their life cycle: an aquatic stage (the tadpole phase) and terrestrial stage (adult metamorph). Both phases involve radically different body forms, ecology and lifestyles. But one thing that is common to both forms is that they are subject to a wide spectrum of environmental stress and challenges. (Not all frogs, however, have tadpoles. Many Philippine species of frogs skip the tadpole stage and their eggs develop directly into small frogs! This is a mode of reproduction known as direct development.)

Frogs play an essential function in the web of life. In the food chains, for example, they are a major predator of insects and many other invertebrates (animals without backbones). One could just imagine their important role in controlling the population of insect pests that could potentially damage important agricultural crops.

At the same time, frogs are a chief source of food for other animals, both vertebrates (especially birds, snakes, lizards, snakes, river otters and other frogs) and invertebrates. As we all know, many musicians also are fond of feasting on frog meat (some satay vendors, when frogs can be seen and caught in great abundance around lakes, ponds, and in flooded rice fields.

Limnonectes woodworthi

2 HOW MANY FROG SPECIES ARE FOUND IN THE PHILIPPINES?

There are about 145 known species of frogs in the Philippines. But herpetologists (those who study amphibians and reptiles) are aware of the presence of many other species, particularly those that have not been given formal names yet and are new to the process of being "described" to science. When this is done, the Philippines will likely have somewhere between 180 and 200 species of frogs! What is more fascinating is that over 80 percent of the species can only be found in the country.

For a relatively small country, the Philippines is extraordinarily rich in species of frogs. Like other reptiles, its amphibians are endemic to this archipelago. The pathogen and breakneck-rate frog-killing chytrid fungus (Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis) has not yet been detected in this country. Hence, the Philippines is currently a stronghold for many species of frogs that are threatened with extinction elsewhere in the world.

Ceratobatrachus guentheri

Ceratobatrachus guentheri

Occidozyga laevis

3 WHAT AREAS WERE STUDIED BY A US-PHILIPPINE RESEARCH TEAM?

A team of Filipino and American scientists has conducted extensive field surveys of amphibians and reptiles in the Philippines since 2004. So far, the team has surveyed 26 different places on the islands of Luzon, Leyte, Cebu, Dinagat Island, Negros, Palawan, Mindoro and Polillo. The ongoing study is part of a larger, collaborative research program on Philippine biodiversity between scientists from the Philippines and the United States.

The biodiversity research included a survey of the presence of the chytrid fungus in the Philippines. This was led by scientists from the University of Kansas, Texas, University of Kansas and the National Museum of the Philippines in partnership with the San Francisco State University Silliman University, Angelo King Center for Research and Environmental Management and the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Our field surveys were conducted in forested areas (such as mountains, national parks, watershed areas) but we also surveyed disturbed habitats (such as roadside ditches, rice fields, crop plantations, built-up areas and even gardens).

We surveyed all frogs that are found from extreme areas for the chytrid fungus. Our initial results show the presence of chytrid fungus in five species of frogs that we found from ravine cultures in Luzon: Mt. Polagyudan (in Cavite province) and Mt. Labo (in Camarines Norte).

Limnonectes macrocephalus

4 ARE THE FROG SPECIES FOUND INFECTED WITH THE FUNGUS FOUND ONLY IN LUZON?

The five species of frogs that tested positive for chytrid fungus were Limnonectes macrocephalus, Limnonectes woodworthi, Rana similis, Rana leytensis and Occidozyga laevis. Species of Limnonectes are commonly called "fanged frogs." Both the species of Rana are "Asiatic frogs" and Occidozyga frogs are commonly known as "puddle frogs."

All these frogs are associated with aquatic environments and are especially found in mountain streams and have flowing rivers.

Except for Occidozyga laevis, all species are endemic to the Luzon Pleistocene Aggregate Island Complex or Luzon PAIC. Scientists consider the Luzon PAIC a separate biogeographic region in the Philippines. This means that the species of animals (and also plants) that are found in this region are unique to the region and are usually not found from other places in the Philippines.

Luzon PAIC includes the islands of Luzon, Polillo island group, Catanduanes, Marinduque and other adjacent islands around Luzon. Sometime during the geological past of the Philippines (that is millions of years ago), all these islands were connected to each other and formed one land mass.

5 HOW DOES THE FUNGUS KILL FROGS?

First of all, the type of fungus that we are talking about is called chytrid. Chytrid fungi are primarily found in soil and water but are certainly present almost everywhere. So far, only one of the 500 or so species of chytrid has been found to parasitize vertebrates—frogs, specifically... and gives by the scientific name Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis. Let us use the acronym Bd for this fungus.

Studies have shown that Bd causes a pathogenic skin disease in amphibians called chytridiomycosis. This disease has been linked to mass mortalities of frogs in many countries in North, Central and South America and in Australia.

Scientists have also found that chytridiomycosis, interacting with other environmental factors, may have triggered die-offs in the relatively-undisturbed many frog populations in those countries, and worse, have caused the extinction of several species.

Bd lives in the skin of frogs. Like other chytrids, Bd produces zoospores (hundreds to thousands of them) in order to reproduce and to disperse. The zoospores are encased inside a structure called sporangium (plural, sporangia), which can be found scattered all over the skin cells of an infected frog. When they mature, the zoospores are ejected from the sporangium through the fungal tubes that poke out of the frog's skin.

Researchers believe that the disease disrupts biological processes in the skin of diseased frogs. Keep in mind that the water permeable skin of amphibians plays a critical function in respiration.

Researchers also suspect that Bd produces toxins during the infection stage. The pathogen and weakens the frog and eventually kills it.

6 WHEN DID THE FUNGUS REACH THE PHILIPPINES? HOW IS IT SPREAD?

We do not know the answers at this point. But the results of recent studies from other countries could provide helpful information.

The studies indicate that Bd might have been introduced along with commercially traded frogs. Frogs are massively exported or imported as pets, meats for medical research, and trade for the pet trade, as pets, zoo exhibits, or for frog farming.

One study suggested that Bd may have originated from Africa with the African clawed frog, apparently introduced into other countries through commercial trade of frogs. Another study done in Japan documented the introduction of an alien species of frog for food and pet trade was the culprit for the appearance of the chytrid fungus in that country.

The results of these studies are highly relevant to us in the Philippines since we know that alien species are commonly traded in the country. In fact, there are now at least five species of alien frogs in the Philippines based on a previous study that was conducted ourselves. One of the five alien species is the Philippine-Hong Kong (Guangdong) in the same species of frog that Japanese researchers found to be a vector of Bd.

The five species listed, Bd may have been in the Philippines for a long time and only recently did it reach pathogenic levels, that perhaps introduced changes in the environment, or, more likely, both. Bd may also, in fact, be a native pathogen of frogs, but has become more virulent because of human-induced changes in our country.

But then again, we do not have the data right now to reach such a conclusive statement. For example, we even lack baseline information on the population ecology or abundance of frogs (how common is a species), so we found the chytrid fungus. Thus, we do not have any historical data to compare the information that we have now.

7 WHEN DID IT START OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY?

Scientists were able to identify Bd and the disease it causes in the late 1990s. But researchers working in Central and South America started noticing that something was amiss as early as 1970s, when these populations of frogs that they were studying and monitoring started to decline and even collapsed.

8 HOW MANY COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE FUNGUS?

Bd is now known from at least 43 countries and has infected more than 100 different species of frogs.

It has been recorded in countries in North, Central and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Southeast Asia and Oceania (Australia and New Zealand).

9 WHAT ARE THE STEPS BEING TAKEN TO SAVE THE FROGS?

In other countries, Bd infected frogs are caught from the wild and are brought into captivity with the aim of preventing the spread of infection to other individual frogs, species or populations. While the diseased frogs are being kept in zoos, museums, laboratories, or research centers, careful observation and monitoring are done. Some groups of researchers have found success in the treatment of diseased frogs using antifungal medications.

But in general, scientists feel that current conservation efforts are insufficient and the available options to control and to combat the spread of the disease are very limited. Scientists are still striving to find more effective and long-term solutions to this global problem.

That is why we believe that it is very important now to establish a monitoring program on chytrid fungus in the Philippines. Among the first steps that should be done are to: (1) find out which other areas in the country are Bd positive; (2) identify which other species of frogs are affected; and (3) Determine and assess the effects of Bd on the frog community.

In the meantime, the rare areas where we found the presence of Bd need to be monitored and assessed if the chytrid is causing a decline in their frog populations.

(Arvin C. Diesmos, Ph.D., an ecologist, is curator and research associate at the zoology division of the National Museum of the Philippines, Manila and is on leave of the herpetology section. Mae Lenor L. Diesmos, M.Sc., a biologist, is an instructor and assistant professor at the Institute of Biological Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Santo Tomas, Manila.

Rafe M. Brown, Ph.D., another county biologist, is a curator at the Natural History Museum and Biodiversity Institute of Kansas and an associate professor at the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology of the University of Kansas.)

Delicacy

BASED ON OUR personal experiences in doing fieldwork across the country, many Filipinos do eat frogs whether they are members of indigenous groups in the uplands, are rural folks or living in urban centers.

As a matter of fact, almost any kind of animal is game for food and even for "pulutan" (bar chow)!

For our purpose, it is convenient to categorize into two the kinds of frogs that are eaten by people.

Category 1: Frogs that are normally eaten by people

This includes frogs that are found in grasslands, rice fields and open areas.

These are rice-field and black-eyed marsh frogs (Fejervarya, tiger frogs (Hoplobatrachus) and narrow-mouth frogs (Kaloula). Some people also eat tree frogs, which are locally called "palakang sayog" (Polypedates).

Curiously, many people across the country have also resorted to eating a dangerous alien species: the cane toad or marine toad (Bufo marinus). This frog is called by a variety of local names such as Australian frog, Mauritius frog, American frog, bullfrog, Mindoro frog or "Sarag."

This species is poisonous and possesses toxins in their skin, hiding this frog is certainly very dangerous and may even cause death.

Category 2: Forest frogs

Locals consider these frogs the "wild" kind, mainly because these are generally found only in wild habitats (especially in forests) and are not normally seen by people.

Examples in this category are fanged frogs (Limnonectes) of which there are about 10 species, and stream frogs (Rana). These frogs inhabit mountain streams and rivers in forested areas.

Arvin Diesmos, Mae Lenor Diesmos and Rafe Brown

BEWARE! This species, "Bufo marinus," is poisonous.

AFP officers liable for contempt, says CHR chief

DE LIMA

MAGNO

THE MILITARY OFFICERS HOLDING the 43 health workers may be liable for contempt for failing to present them to the court as ordered, Commission on Human Rights (CHR) Chair Leila de Lima said yesterday.

In a statement, De Lima also said the military's failure to produce the "Morong 43" was "really a dangerous precedent in our justice system."

"The cited reason, lack of material time to prepare for transit of the so-called high-risk detainees, is my mind, is not a valid one. It goes against the very essence of writs of habeas corpus. If the [military] authorities had the will to obey the orders, they could, with best or earnest efforts, have done so. A contempt charge would have been in order," she said.

De Lima warned the military to "come and desist" from subjecting the health workers to further interrogations, mental torture, indignities and other human rights violations. "[The] question of who they are, alleged NPAs (New People's Army) or not, they all have human rights. No one deserves to be treated inhumanely," she said.

Electric shock

De Lima said the CHR sent a team of doctors to Camp Capinpin on Feb. 11 to check on the physical condition of the detainees.

She said one had complained of twitching in his thigh, which he attributed to some form of electric shock.

"Some male detainees have injuries on their wrists due to tight handcuffs, about two of them have injuries surrounding the eye area due to tight blindfolding," she said.

De Lima said the CHR's initial finding of mental and psychological torture remained valid, meaning the detainees were continuously blindfolded and handcuffed for 36 hours, were fed by someone else, had their underwear removed by someone else during trips to the toilet, and repeatedly interrogated using same stories.

She said the detainees were denied right to counsel at the time of the arrest and during interrogations and inquests.

Planting of evidence

De Lima said that despite the CHR's finding that there was no indication of planting of evidence by the raiding team, "I hasten to add that we've not prejudged at this point to completely rule [it] out."

She also reiterated that the search warrant "is patently defective on its face."

Alexis Pupa

AFP chief: Obey courts

From page A1

over the detainees.

"That is a legitimate, justified reason. Security matters can't be trifled with because these are, as he so the military is concerned, ASG rebels. And we all know that NPAs are notorious for waging ambushes," he said by phone.

Comply immediately

Teodoro said that if he were still the defense secretary, he would have ordered the AFP leadership to "comply immediately" with the writ of habeas corpus issued by the high court.

"They should present [the detainees]. There's no reason not to follow court orders. That is inexcusable," he told reporters on the final round-and-fold canal in Manila.

"I would order, not just advise, immediate compliance with the Supreme Court writ," he said.

Teodoro, a bar topnotcher and a Harvard-trained lawyer, said that when the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus were suspended, "you still have to produce the body when ordered by the court."

"[Producing a person in court] is only a stage in habeas corpus. Whatever proclamation or what not, if a court orders you, you have to [comply] order, he said.

Teodoro declined to comment on the military's claim that the detainees, 43 were NPA members, and on their families' charge that they were coerced.

"These allegations have to be investigated properly" he said.

No joke

Brig. Lt. Col. Noel Detoyato, 2nd Lt spokesperson, said the military had not intended to delay the high court's orders.

Transporting 43 high risk prisoners from Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal, to Marikina is no joke. It's not like bringing one or two detainees. It requires a thorough security planning," Detoyato said in a phone interview.

"Imagine if we assign a soldier to guard each of the prisoners, that's already 86 persons. Unfortunately, we don't have a bus or a large vehicle. We will have to find one," he said, adding:

"It would be a pity and a shame if the rebels get a chance to ambush our military vehicles."

Detoyato promised to take the detainees on the next hearing at the appellate court in Manila on Monday.

"We will be ready by then. We will do all the necessary logistical requirements this weekend," he said.

Acting on a petition for habeas corpus lodged by the health workers' relatives, the high court ordered the military on Wednesday to present them at a hearing on Friday at the Court of Appeals.

But the military did not do so. It said there was no time to ensure security measures for the detainees' transfer.

The health workers were taken at gunpoint by a raiding team of soldiers and police-men from a health training seminar in Morong, Rizal, on Feb. 6 and detained at Camp Capinpin.

The raiding team claimed that the health workers were NPA members and that it had found explosives at the seminar venue.

The families and colleagues of the health workers complained that they were held incommunicado for two days and tortured by their military captors.

'Regular NPAs'

Detoyato said the AFP had asked the Philippine National Police to provide road security for the convoy of vehicles that would transport the detainees to the appellate court.

Citing previous incidents, he raised the possibility that communist rebels would "try to rescue their arrested comrades."

"The rebels had already done that to the NPAs detained at the provincial jails in Livonia, Quezon, and in Barangay 2 here [once ago," he said.

Despite omissions noted by the health workers' families and the Commission on Human Rights, Detoyato insisted that the arrested persons were "regular NPA members."

"They were assigned different tasks. Some were platoon members while others were squad leaders. They were occupying provincial, regional and national positions in the communist organizations," he claimed.

He scoffed at statements that the health workers were using just as a seminar on providing community health services when rounded up by state forces in a rest house in Morong.

Communist 'trademark'

Detoyato said he had did not yield documents pertaining to the supposed training of community health workers, "but evidences on making bombs."

"In fact, there were medicine for antidepressants. That's the trademark of the NPAs," he said.

Detoyato said the presence of human rights lawyer Romeo Capulong at Friday's hearing at the appellate court was also proof of the arrested persons' purported affiliation with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

"We all know who Romeo Capulong is. He is the lawyer of [communist leader] Jose Maria Sison," he said.

Detoyato admitted blindfolding the health workers, an act prohibited by the Inter-national Human Rights Convention.

"The blindfold was only meant to maintain them for a while. They were not tortured. The mental anguish they suffered was just ordinary for any arrested individual," he claimed.

'Wrong perspective'

Gonzalez said the military should be allowed leeway on the matter.

"What if [the detainees] escaped, or were ambushed on the way to court? Who will be blamed? We have to widen our perspective on these matters," he said.

"Then you the peacekeeping forces do their job if they are always being scrutinized from the wrong perspective?"

SOOTHING, UPLIFTING Violinist Hyeyoon Cagayo plays for sick and wounded soldiers at the pro-Valentine concert at the AFP Medical Center auditorium on Thursday.

Retired general, wife serenade heroes: 'Mona Lisa' to 'I Will Survive'

From page A4

of San Francisco del Monte.

Rita Brawner, wife of the retired general and president of the Ladies of Aglo, said they also organized concerts at the Fort Bonifacio General Hospital, the Philippine Air Force Hospital and the Navy Hospital at the Bonifacio Naval Station in Taguig City.

Rita, also a soprano, sang a duet with her husband.

The Brawners' only son, Lt. Felix Brawner III, was killed in an ambush by the New People's Army in 1986.

At the former Ward on the third floor, bedridden soldiers sat up and listened to Alfredo Buenaventura Tinio Tuple's breathless rendition of the love song, "The Way You Look Tonight."

Heart-to-ears from red-cut-sidine adorned the walls and dangled from the ceiling of the Heroes' Ward.

"My wife is my hero-in, of course," said 34-year-old Cpl. Andrei de la Torre. Wounded from an encounter in Basil, he has a fractured arm and has been confined at the AFPMC since November.

Meanwhile, Pfc. Randy Robin, 22, complained: "Wala akong [I don't have a] valentine." He was wounded in Isabela and has been a patient at the AFPMC since October.

"This much we can offer to our heroes—our real heroes," Mrs. Brawner said.

Musical numbers

Attending the concert were Elaina C. Batista and Tess Adalem, widows of former Army chief Lieutenant General Angelo Batista and Maricano Adalem, respectively. Also present were Aida de Leon, widow of former Air Force chief Jose de Leon, Gly Bautista, Coly Calupig and Marilyn Echaveria.

LOVE TEAM Retired Brig. Gen. Felix Brawner Jr. (right), a bachelors, sings a duet with his wife Rita Brawner, a soprano, at the concert.

The thrilly soprano, Gina Serrano, widow of the hyoran star Jose-Cal. Benny Serrano, drew much applause singing about the pains of "Jealousy." She was accompanied on the piano by Doug Billano.

Violinist Hyeyoon Lagayo and pianist Elmira Lemera enthralled soldiers with George Gelanco compositions made popular by Sharon Daniels.

Baritone Ed de Guia had everyone spellbound with his songs on heroes composed by Joey Ayala and a selection from the opera, "Ines Brava."

17 Pinoys among ship crew released by pirates

By Cynthia D. Balana

SEVENTEEN FILIPINOS WERE among the crew members of a Taiwanese fishing vessel who have been released by Somali pirates, the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (Meco) announced yesterday.

Meco Chair Tomas L. Shortan said the Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed last Thursday that 23 crew members of the Win Far 361, including the Filipinos, were released at 3 p.m. and are now sailing to Port Luis in Mauritius. They are expected to arrive there in one days.

From Mauritius, the sailors will proceed to the fishing reservoir, Seychelles, Amoutan said.

He said Meco will coordinate with the Department of Foreign Affairs and determine whether or not the Filipino seamen need special medical care and travel arrangements.

The 708-ton Win far 361 was seized on April 4, 2009, near an island in the Seychelles, more than 1,100 kilometers off the coast of Somalia, with initially 26 crew members on board. A Chinese sailor and two from Indonesia died in captivity.

Reports did not say if ransom was paid for the release of the ship and crew.

"We are grateful that our compatriots have been released, and we are coordinating with Taiwanese officials to ensure that they are speedily brought back," Amoutan said.

Released were Alfel R. delos Santos, Ruben T. Arguilos, Arnex Marwin Nacis, Andrew Neldan Castanete, Lapaz Mission Seaweis, Jocilyn Jhocky Manuel, Gabriela Debra Tanao, Ambalog Virgilio Arriola, Ginky Shimi Tiles, Gava Hemabian Batalla, Gavin Reynaldo Pogoran, Pedrian Jayson Gara, Ildefonso Allan Pinto Gonyon, Aguilar Sunny Villanueva, Ilaring Arlo Reyes Acuba, Ordinario Jomel Aquino and Orello Jawad Aquino.

MUSIC HEALS Alfie Anerdez (center) and George Dizon (right) serenade wounded soldiers at the pro-Valentine concert.

GORGEOUS CREATURE, symbol of the new lunar year, lords it over the Malabon Zoo.

CHANNEL WITH SOME SOME Round fruits (oranges) and prickly ones (pineapples) are the thing in sharing after feas...

...AS IS this "lion's head" wielded skillfully by street dancers in Chinatown...

...WHILE these figurines of a tiger, which connote power, courage and good fortune. It's the ones in between figure, say shopkeepers.

More Pinoys on charm offensive in Chinatown

From page A1

Elena Ineffao, 45, who has been selling Chinese lucky charms for the past 20 years, refused Tin's observation.

"Most Filipinos are following Chinese traditions, maybe because there are many successful Chinese, especially in the field of business," Ineffao said on Friday.

He, who has been selling lucky charms for more than 10 years, attributed the Filipinos' growing belief in feng shui to the global financial crisis and the series of natural calamities that have wrought death and destruction in the country in the past few years.

Year of the Metal Tiger

People flock to Binondo, not only to join the Chinese community in welcoming the Year of the Metal Tiger, but also to match up good luck charms, observed Jayshan Yongco, a 35-year-old businessman from Makati City, and Vilma de Leon, a 40-year-old resident of Tanza, Cavite.

Yongco said his wares selling business did not do well last year. He was in Binondo on Friday looking for a good luck charm that would attract wealth and prosperity.

On the other hand, De Leon said she was looking for an amulet that would protect her family members and friends.

Feng shui

Tin said she believes there is no conflict between feng shui, an ancient Chinese art that claims to enhance the flow of chi'i, and the Roman Catholic faith.

"Feng shui is not a religion. I always ventured my clients that it's only a guide to harnessing chi'i ... to learn to achieve harmony," she said.

"There is really no such thing as the 'best lucky charm' for anyone," Tin said, adding that people should not rely on luck to achieve success in life.

"People should work hard to find prosperity," she stressed.

Tiger figurines

Tin said the most in demand figurine that year is that of the tiger, since 2010 is the Year of the Metal Tiger.

And since Chinese New Year also coincides with Valentine's Day, some people, women especially, were looking for charms like the Marchuria duck or pink quartz bracelets said to enhance personal relationships.

Lucky figurines come in the shape of coin, rat, fish and frog. Traditional festivities include Buddha statues made of porcelain, metal or wood with crystal, jade and other precious stones.

Fashion statement

Tin said her shop caters to the whole family, including teenagers who are characters of stars love and be interested in their clothes and who wear trinkets as fashion accessories.

"I give them free consultation—advising them about their elements and lucky colors," Tin said, adding that millionaires and politicians are some of her regular clients.

Asked if her clients included presidential aspirants, Tin simply smiled.

"I give advice on their lucky color, I don't tell them if they will win or not. I don't do that," she said.

Round fruits

"This year, the lucky people are born in the Years of the Rat and the Rooster. The unlucky ones are those born in the Years of the Ox and the Monkey," Tin said, adding that the prescribed color this year is white, silver and gold.

She explained that luck, regardless of the year the person was born, could be increased and bad luck mitigated with the proper use of feng shui.

Apart from buying trinkets and lucky charms, people bought round fruits, also believed to bring good luck.

There was a long queue outside Sukaku specializing in ubay (glutinous rice cake). The traditional sweet seen to be fanned to bring not only good luck but also foster closeness among family and friends.

Dragon dance

Dragon and lion dance troupes had a busy day snaking from one street to other, performing to the beat of drums and exploding firecrackers along Diggin and its side streets. They opened New Year chase and received cropus in Chinese bakery products in the wake of it.

At the shrine of Sin Cristo de Longue in the corner of Ongpin and Quezon flowers near the Binondo Church also drew flocked devotees.

Rosalie Chan, who lives in the area, said people usually visit the shrine during Chinese New Year. "They light candles, burn incense and wishes are granted," she said.

Sexiest song ...

From page A1

Billboard has come up with a list of the 50 most popular songs about sex in time for Valentine's Day with each song given points according to its performance on the Billboard Hot 100 chart from the period August 1958 until August this year.

"Physical," released by Newton-John in 1981, tops the list after spending 10 weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. And while it certainly speaks to sex with lyrics such as "There's nothing left to talk about, unless it's horizontal," the song became well known as a rock for aerobics classes in line with the singer's exercise-themed video.

Second on the list is Rod Stewart's 1976's song, "Tonight's the Night," followed by Usher 10 Mico's 1999 ballad, "You Make Love To Him."

"Some songs are steamy slow-jams, some are in-your-arena rockers, but what they all have in common (and what got them on this list) is that the subject matter of each song is directly related to sex, in some way," Billboard said in a statement.

Other highlights include Rod Stewart, who made it to the top 10 twice with "Tonight's the Night" and "I'm In Think I'm Sexy" and Marvin Gaye with the classic, "Let's Get It On."

The top 10 of the 50 sexiest songs are:

1. "Physical" – Olivia Newton-John
2. "Tonight's The Night" – Rod Stewart
3. "I'll Make Love To You" – Boyz II Men
4. "Too Close" – Next
5. "Let's Get It On" – Marvin Gaye
6. "Give Stuff" – Donna Summer
7. "(In This) To Me One More Time" – Captain and Tennille
8. "Like A Virgin" – Madonna
9. "Kiss You All Over" – Exile
10. "I'm In Think I'm Sexy?" – Rod Stewart

Reuters

Saudi religious police see red on Valentine's Day

THE RELIGIOUS POLICE IN SAUDI Arabia are sealing red in the run-up to Valentine's Day and overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) have been warned not to celebrate the day of lovers openly.

John Leonard Montemayor, 30, a resident Middle East regional coordinator, warned the more than 2.2 million OFWs in Saudi Arabia that the Feb. 14 celebration is banned in many, if not all, Arab Muslim countries.

OFWs, especially those in relatively liberal cultivated Valentine's Day "with utmost care," said Montemayor.

"In Saudi Arabia alone, the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vices, also known as the religious police, strictly enforces the ban on the practice which they regard as an alien and unislamic activity," Montemayor said.

The Saudi religious police launched Thursday a nationwide crackdown on items selling items that are red or in any way offensive to the banned celebration of Valentine's Day.

Red roses, red gifts, etc.

Members of the feared religious police were inspecting shops for red roses, heart-shaped objects and gifts wrapped in red, and ordering store owners to get rid of them, a Saudi official told The Associated Press.

The Valentine's Day prohibition is in line with Saudi Arabia's strict Wahhabi school of Islam that the Kingdom has followed for more than a century from birthdays and Mother's Day are frowned on by the religious establishment in the birthplace of Islam, although people almost never get punished for celebrating them.

Not so Valentine's Day, limited after a Christian saint said to have been murdered by the Romans in the 3rd century.

Red-colored or heart-shaped items are kept at other times of the year, but as Feb. 14 nears they become contraband.

No flying kisses

Most shops in Riyadh's upscale neighborhoods have removed all red items from their shelves. A statement by the religious police was published in Saudi newspapers warning shopowners against any violations.

Businesses advised OFWs not to wear anything red or be seen carrying anything red ordered outside their homes, like flowers or heart-shaped gift items.

"Be confident to be seen by the police or other locals bearing items to your friends or workmates. Also, don't greet other nationalities 'Happy Valentine's Day' to public or you'll be in big trouble," he said.

Alberto also would like to call family members or friends in the Philippines or send Valentine's Day greetings by e-mail or text messages, he said.

There are more than 2.2 million OFWs in the Middle East. Another 400,000 OFWs are based in the United Arab Emirates, while 200,000 and 150,000 are in Qatar and Kuwait.

Jerry E. Esplanada and AP

Gordon wants tax on text to hike teachers' pay to P40k

From page A1

many people he has helped as chair of the Philippine National Red Cross in support his candidacy admits to being frank and straightforward.

"I like people to be assertive and ambitious, but they have to work hard," he said.

Not a tax

Gordon stressed the importance of improving the country's education system during a meeting with businessmen, colleagues and correspondents on Wednesday night.

He reiterated his tax on text proposal on Friday before an audience of 300 college students at St. Paul Uni. versity in Manila.

"It is not a tax but not contribution to education and health," he said.

He stressed the need to focus on education, considering that out of every 100 children who enter Grade 1, only 17 will go on to finish college.

GORDON on the stump in Imus, Cavite, has been using votes to stress the value of education.

While he said he would eliminate corruption by his fourth year in office, charging a 10-centavo tax on each of the almost 5 billion text messages sent by Filipinos each day would immediately provide the funds for his educational programs.

And if users were to cut down on text messaging as a result, a 50-centavo tax on an 2 billion text messages would still give the government P1 billion every day, or P365 billion a year.

He said the funds would go directly to what he called a Hello! or Health and Education Involvement Program, which could be monitored by the top officials of the country's big network to prevent misuse.

As if to gauge the public reaction to his proposal, Gordon asked the students if they approved of his program to raise teachers' salaries and buy more Filipino public school pupil a Hello.

The answer was an overwhelming "yes."

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INQUIRER Mindanao

Compostela Valley lures NPA rebels

Counterinsurgency war exacts heaviest toll on remote areas, villagers

By Fristan Lim
Inquirer Visayas

'The government should see to it that all the basic services are given to depressed communities... These places are most vulnerable... Let not the people see even a single reason to gripe against the government...'

LIKE ANY OTHER 11-YEAR-OLD, Jinky Estancia loves to play and watch her favorite cartoon show on TV. The frail, dark-skinned Grade 5 pupil is eager to go to school everyday and wants to be a professional someday, a teacher maybe.

That's the room where she was a year ago, when she hated going to school and would be easily startled by sudden noise. She would cower and bury herself against the skirt of her mother when she heard a bang like that of a gunshot.

"She would even scream and cry upon hearing sounds from a gun. I and my wife would then embrace her tightly, assuring her that she is safe and nobody is harming her anymore," Alex, a farmer, said of his daughter.

The Estancia couple and their four children live in a one-house compound (actually a house and a hut) along the winding and unpaved road in Sitio Palma, Barangay San Isidro, Monkayo, in Compostela Valley.

The community of just over a dozen of farmers is a virtual serene upland hamlet; the occasional whirr of dirtbike (motorcycles fitted with wing-like spars to carry more riders used as main mode of public transport) cuts the morning silence.

Residents subsist either as farmers or gold miners in mining sites in neighboring towns. Technology has yet to fully engulf the place; only a handful of homes have TVs and cellular phones do not operate for lack of signal.

Its peace is sometimes disturbed, with tragic results.

The New People's Army (NPA) is known to operate in the area, resulting in sporadic fighting between the communist insurgents and government soldiers and militiamen.

Neighbors vs neighbors

Many young people have been drawn to the fighting, some enlisting as members of the Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu) and some as Red fighters.

It's like neighbors against neighbors, observed Magdaleena, Alex's wife.

Her classmates in the elementary school and eventually joined the movement. "We used to see them sneak out during classes and train on hand-to-hand fighting at the school grounds," Magdaleena recounted.

Now in her late 20s, Magdaleena said she was surprised when Wilmer and several others eventually stopped schooling and were out seen in the village anymore.

Until several years later, she said in the surrender, she saw "many armed men" sit. Her village once. "I was told they're NPA. I was to figure out that some of them are my former classmates, Wilmer and Jonny."

Amay, Magdaleena would learn later, was the rebel leader known as Ka Leonardo. Jinggoy a battle-tested guerrilla she used to know as the "soft-spoken, sincere silent" younger playmate Eliaddo Calitro.

At the erstwhile leader of the NPA's Front Committee 3, Calitro led some of the most high-profile rebel operations in Compostela Valley in recent years, according to the military.

On April 26, 2008, government troops and some civilians coming from a village from were ambushed while walking along the dirt road in Sitio Pilkas. Five soldiers and militiamen were killed and many others wounded.

Among those wounded were Jinky and her then 7-year-old sibling, Rebecca. A bullet grazed Jinky's forehead, just several centimeters from her eye. Rebecca had heartwrenching injuries.

The rebels strangled on their wounds and reportedly gave the family a substantial amount for hospitalization.

Other attacks allegedly mounted by Jinggoy's group happened in Compostela Valley.

Also in San Isidro, Jinggoy's men were said to be responsible in shooting to death a militiaman in August 2007 while the victim and a soldier were bathing naked in a well, a kilometer from the militia detachment beside the Estancia residence.

The rebels captured the soldier, Pfc Marjun Gomela, after a brief firefight and held him captive for several months, setting off a string of NPA abductions of soldiers and policemen in the province and frantic appeals from local officials to free them.

'NPA-infested'

The military has considered San Isidro and most of the province "NPA-infested" areas, and local officials have placed top priority on solving the problem.

Considered rich in mineral resources, particularly gold and timber, Compostela Valley has become a virtual magnet to insurgency. According to the military, more than P5B millions are collected yearly by the rebels in "revolutionary taxes" from businesses, mining companies and banana plantations in the province alone.

The Mt. Diwalwal gold rush area in Monkayo town, and other gold-rich areas are said to have also pumped life into the insurgency, with rebels either "soliciting" or extorting and instead guards or collecting outright "taxes" from miners.

"They have ceased to function as a revolutionary movement. They've just plain extortionists," Maj. Randolph Cabangbang, Eastern Mindanao Command spokesperson, had said in previous interviews.

Gen Ariston Oclay said the seemingly unending NPA problem has put the province in a bad light, scaring away investors and denying people's lives, especially those living in upland villages where the rebels hold sway.

Just how strong is the NPA in its Compostela Valley?

7 rebel fronts

According to Maj. Emilio Napoli, commander of the Army's 1st Special Forces Battalion, a succession of military offensives since last year had reduced the rebel strength in the province. Police disclose seven rebel fronts (platoons) with just over 200 cadres and a similar number of militia.

In a briefing at the provincial capitol, Napoli said the pursuing local troops was aimed at "neutralizing" the rebels "into inconsequential levels."

President Macapagal-Arroyo has added 2010 as the deadline for the military to crush the communist insurgency. But like other places where the NPA is active, the communist insurgency in Compostela Valley could be still around even after.

For now, life in communities like in San Isidro is still difficult. Hard life breeds discontent, and a slight provocation could persuade poor farmers to join the rebels, a village official, who requested anonymity, warned.

"The government should see to it that all the basic services are given to depressed communities like in San Isidro. These places are most vulnerable to exploitation from groups. Let not the people see even a single reason to gripe against the government," he said in the vernacular.

The government responded with the pouring in of many projects in areas said to be "NPA-influenced."

Infrastructure projects

Last year, the provision received 40-of the 69 infrastructure projects from the P78.9 million granted by the Department of National Defense's Kalayaan in Barangay Dagmar (KDC) in Davao region.

But from peace partaks despite the military efforts to win the support of the local population.

Since its creation in 1998, Compostela Valley has seen some of the fiercest fighting between government and NPA forces.

In 2001, 18 soldiers and militiamen were killed when guerrillas waylaid an Army patrol in Barangay Andap, New Bataan town.

In 2008, six soldiers, including a junior officer, died when rebels detonated a land mine in another ambush-style in Nabunturan.

An unspecified number of rebels have also been killed.

As casualties from both sides continue to rise, so does the toll on civilians. In March 2007, 9-year-old Cecil Dura was shot dead when soldiers and NPA guerrillas fought in an encounter in Barangay Babayog, also in New Bataan.

Death of a child

The military earlier ragged the Grade 3 pupil as a child-combatant of the NPA, an M-16 rifle allegedly found beside her body was the supposed proof. Later, it retracted its claim, saying she was killed in a crossfire and that NPA rebels might have caused her death.

Cavetl's family vehemently denied that she was cover an NPA member.

Several local officials said to be supporters of the government's anti-insurgency campaign have been murdered. In some, several peasant leaders, activists and members of progressive groups ragged by the military as communist sympathizers.

The father of Sis Jinggoy was also a victim of one of the alleged unsolved killings.

The military also drew flak from government and private groups for alleged human rights violations committed in areas where it has considerable presence.

In New Bataan, for example, the Kampanian Southern Mindanao has called for the pullout of troops, alleging soldiers have been camping out near residential areas, setting up barangay defense system (BDS) checkpoints and turning neighborhoods and school grounds into virtual barracks.

Renewed AFP drive

The military has renewed its campaign against the NPA in the province. On Jan. 30, Jinggoy was captured by government forces when he was wounded in an encounter in an upland village in Lusk town. Three of his comrades, among them 34-year-old Ka Wilmer, were killed.

Jinggoy's is another man a big victory for the military, according to Brig. Gen. Edmundo del Rosario, 10thInf Infantry Brigade commander. "That [arrest] denied the [NPA's] capability to the area," Del Rosario said.

"The group under him is now leaderless," said Col. Bonifacio Tucan, another brigade officer.

But Sis Jessie Sapo, Aaron Aquino, Compostela Valley police chief, the capture does not mean the end of insurgency in his province. "It's a big blow to the NPA, but definitely a new leader will likely emerge and continue the fight," he vowed.

When Magdaleena heard the news about Jinggoy's capture and the death of her two neighbors, she realized help for victory on them.

"Without arm my playmate. I like knew Amay," she said, stroking Rebecca's hair. While Jinky sat on a wooden chair beside, the young girl was scrambling the fingers inside of both her hands.

Alex, who was cooking lunch at their outdoor kitchen, said: "I'm saddened that some of my neighbors have died violently. But Jinggoy had to answer all his crimes."

"My children were just lucky to have survived to their symbols. It would have been difficult for us now if Jinky and Rebecca were killed," he said.

INQUIRER mobile news

INQUIRER LIFESTYLE: In tomorrow's Lifestyle, read about how a go-with-the-flow couple raises their children; how to pack Christmas lights and decor for storage; and where to find the "batingting."

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Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Burgonio

Quezon folk dig into pockets for Noy

AURORA Matondas, 72, takes the stage in Lucena City to drop into a gallon of donations her own P20 contribution to the presidential campaign of Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III.

LUCENA CITY—THE PLASTIC GALLON HELD about P8,000 in coins and peso bills and represented what supporters of Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III said was their small contribution to his campaign.

At 56 fundraisers, president of the Sacred Heart College (SHC) here, handed over the donations to Viel Aquino-Dee, sister of the Liberal Party standard bearer.

As Viel held the collection after a yellow cloth that covered it was removed, Antonio Meloroba, TL and SHC alumnus, climbed the stage and pulled out a P20 bill from her wallet and put it inside the gallon. It caused Viel to roar.

Such acts of enthusiasm and corner stops at the launch of "Laban ng Pinoy, Quezbay Tayo" campaign here to drum up support for the presidential campaign of the late President Corazon Aquino's only son.

Much of the goodwill at the launch of the campaign was toward Mr. Aquino, but some of it rubbed off on Noynoy.

Meloroba, who described herself as a Cory loyalist, said her attendance at the launch of Laban ng Pinoy, Quezbay Tayo was all about her support for good governance.

"President Cory was a good president," she said as she held a book on Cory "Let us all continue the fight for good governance."

Fr. Raul Enriquez, an activist priest based in the province, said it was not about Noynoy but about the continuing fight for good governance.

"Enough of corruption, anomalies and scandals in government," said Enriquez at a press conference that followed the launch.

Noynoy supporters were jubilant throughout the launch, chanting his name as Viel received the donations.

Startpats warned that the elections may not even push through, saying the Arroyo administration was capable of doing such things.

"The Arroyo regime may even declare martial law just to prolong her evil ways in power," Soliman said.

Bishop Soliman, former social welfare secretary and now top Arroyo critic, said Fr. Enriquez's scenario was not far fetched.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, said Soliman, was "really afraid to lose power." Soliman is now part of the campaign team of Noynoy and his running mate, Sen. Manuel Roxas/Sonia B.

Members of the Laban ng Pinoy, Quezbay Tayo held a bonfire parade and sponsored a concert. It was initiated by volunteers from Tanggol Ka Ilkasyo, an environment watchdog group, that keeps a Facebook account with 1,239 registered fans. Jhaffet T. Khalifa Ur, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Dams from Luzon to Mindanao drying up, cutting power supply

FROM LUZON TO MINDANAO, falling water levels in dams are forcing power suppliers to resort to what they call load shedding, or outages, to cope with demand.

Two sources of hydroelectric power to Mindanao—Lake Lanao in Lanao del Sur and Pulangi River in Bukidnon—are currently unable to supply enough water to run the turbines of power generation plants that rely on them.

Rory Martinez, corporate communications officer of the National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP), said 10 MWs has reduced the amount of water to the two hydroelectric power sources.

He said the capacity of Mindanao's hydroelectric plants was reduced by half.

The NGCP which took over the National Transmission Co. (Transco), was forced to resort to rotating brownouts throughout Mindanao, she said.

The brownouts, she added, were likely to last the entire February.

The NGCP said brownouts started Feb. 3 with four rotating sites followed in different areas: 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m., 12-31 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and 5:31 p.m. to 9 or 10 p.m.

The NGCP placed the Mindanao Grid on red alert on Feb. 9 because "contingency reserve is zero due to generation deficiency."

Two other power sources in Mindanao—one unit of the Mindanao Coal-Fired Power Plant (MCFPP) and the Iligan Diesel Power Plant (IDPP)—are currently unable to supply electricity. One unit of MCFPP and Mandaya, resumed supply last Friday but supply was still unsufficient for the whole island.

A diesel-fired plant of the Western Mindanao Corp. in Zamboanga City reduced its output from 90 to 80 megawatts on Feb. 9.

The resumption of electricity that is needed further in Mindanao is about 149 megawatts.

In Digos City, businessmen and residents have started complaining about the daily power outages.

Engineer Jesus dela Victoria, manager of the Davao del Sur Electric Cooperative, said water were being sought to reduce the outages.

In Isabela, power distributors are rearranging their brownout schedules after water level at the Magat Dam plunged to 183.6 meters on Friday, 25.4 meters below the required level of 193 meters.

Closed-door operations were launched in the hope of "making artificial rain to replenish the dam water or fill up the basin," said Emmanuel Bendijo, officer in charge of Magat Dam.

Cagayan Valley officials of the NGCP have alerted the provinces about possible brownouts.

Ilocano brownouts are scheduled on Feb. 17 in Santiago City, Ramos, San Isidro and Cordon towns in Isabela; Alfonso Lista town in Ifugao; and Cabarroguis, Diffun, Saguday, Aglipay, Maddela and Nagtipunan towns in Quirino. Kyzar D. Bonoan, Orlando Dinop and Carla Agoncillo, Inquirer Mindanao with Villamor Visaya Jr., Inquirer Northern Luzon

Highway helps Army, execs bring changes, remove rebs

By Dodjie Mallari Jr.
Uniana, Quezon

MONTICH BUNDOK: Peninsula and the image that comes to mind immediately is one of a place ruled by communist guerrillas.

That was right years ago, however, when government began to feel the force of the New People's Army (NPA).

When construction on a 150-kilometer highway started in 1999, officials knew the days of Bondoc Peninsula as a guerrilla haven were numbered.

The highway was completed in 2002, and people's lives saw dramatic changes.

Carmen Abalos, retired principal in Mulanay town, said she enjoyed traveling to the highway nowadays.

"We can now go to towns in the country, do some shopping there and return in the afternoon still fresh," she said.

Before the P1.4-billion highway came, people from Mulanay and neighboring towns traveled by boat to Lucena City, the only means of transportation then.

"There were no roads to speak of but just a maze of rugged trails with thick dust during summer and impossible during rainy season because of thick mud," Abalos said.

Officials attribute improvement in the lives of people in Bondoc Peninsula to the highway's completion.

"Bondoc Peninsula is no longer the same poor and communist-influenced area," said Commander Villena, mayor of Pitogo town. "With the highway, the quality of life here has significantly improved."

Rep. Danilo Suarez, who hails from Unisan town, said he remembers the hardships he himself went through with-

PORTION of the P1.4-billion highway in Bondoc Peninsula.

out the highway in Bondoc Peninsula.

The installed gadding instilled by other politicians when he broached the idea of pushing the construction of a highway from Pagbilao town in the tip of the Bondoc Peninsula.

If there was one lordly who was happiest at the completion of the highway, however, it is the military.

"The presence of the AFP in the Bondoc Peninsula is now almost irrelevant, and the bodies," said Lt. Gen. Roland Detabali, head of the Southern Luzon Command.

The highway worked wonders for the Army. "The forces of the military itself, is to be part of the ongoing development efforts," said Detabali.

The highway also encouraged other officials to pitch in in the campaign to promote Bondoc Peninsula.

Early this year, Quezon Board Member Lourdes de Leon-Dumenpan, who is from Catanauan town, launched the Discover Bondoc program that seeks to promote tourism spots in the peninsula.

The highway also paved the way for cellular phone services and other livelihood projects that officials said would help keep guerrillas at bay because they have moved no longer be the dangers than it was prior to the highway's construction.

The only problem left are agrarian reform issues in the peninsula, particularly in the towns of San Narciso, San Francisco and Buenavista.

These issues, according to Suarez, will eventually be settled through the implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program with Reform (Carper) law.

Cavite gov on warpath with DILG, PNP execs

By Nina Calleja

CAVITE GOV. ERINEO "Ayong" Maliksi is on a warpath with top officials of the Philippine National Police and Department of Interior and Local Government over the appointment of his province's police chief.

Maliksi asked a court in Cavite to bar Jesus Verzosa, PNP chief, and Ronaldo Puno, interior secretary, in contempt for disobeying a court order to halt the appointment of a new police chief in Cavite.

Maliksi also charged the two officials at the Commission on Elections (Comelec) for defying the ban on appointing or transferring government officials during the election period.

Maliksi is fighting to keep Senior Supt. Alfred Corpuz in Cavite police chief.

Verzosa and Puno replaced Corpuz with Senior Supt. Pantaleon Tabujara, who was allegedly backed by Maliksi.

Maliksi, who is on his last term, is running for congressman under the Liberal Party.

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NEWS

Bacolod tower a gift of love for John Paul II

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—AN EIGHT-story building has been erected on the spot in the city's reclamation area where Pope John Paul II delivered one of his most strongly-worded speeches on behalf of the poor.

The P37-million Pope John Paul II Tower sits on the 700-square-meter lot where the late leader of the Catholic Church spoke to thousands of Negrenses during his historic visit to the city on Feb. 20, 1981, San Sebastian Cathedral rector Fr. Nilo Pesquin said.

The Pope John Paul II Tower was a "gift of love to the Catholic Church" from Bacolod Send Home Development Corp. president Hospicio Palanca, Pesquin said Thursday.

Catholic leaders here hope it would become a pilgrimage site and tourist attraction.

The tower, the most imposing structure in Bacolod City, features an 8-foot sculpture of the late Pontiff atop a 6-ft pedestal. The structure includes a 12-ft lighted cross.

Bro. Jumrel Advincula sculpted the statue showing Pope John Paul II giving his blessings to the people.

Two floors will be a museum that would house John Paul II memorabilia, including one of his vestments or albs, Pesquin said.

Bacolod Bishop Vicente Navarra on Monday rendered the alb from the Cardinal-Archbishop of Krakow, Poland, he said.

Bacolod residents have also saved in their souvenirs of the papal visit, including medals and pins that would be displayed at the museum, Pesquin said.

The museum would also display enlarged photos of the visit of the Pope to Negros, which was a major highlight in the life of the Diocese of Bacolod the past 75 years, he added.

Pesquin said they plan to establish linkages with travel agencies that include the tower in their itinerary when they sell Bacolod to tourists.

The tower's seventh and eighth floors would serve as viewing decks where a coffee shop and a souvenir shop have been proposed, he said.

Palanca will turn over the tower to Bacolod Bishop Vicente Navarra on Feb. 16.

Archbishop Joseph Edward Adams, Papal Nuncio to the Philippines, is expected to attend the rites and assist Navarra in blessing the structure, Pesquin said.

After the ceremony of the tower to the Diocese of Bacolod, the bishop might organize a management team to operate it, he said.

The construction of the tower was timed for the diamond jubilee of the diocese this year.

Pesquin said the late Bishop Antonio Y. Frondo had put up a marker to commemorate the Pope's visit as the reclamation area has this could no longer be found.

Outside had stated that during his visit to Bacolod, the Pope delivered one of his most powerful messages on behalf of the poor.

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Aplus METRO
Editor Abelardo S. Llanday

A volunteer pays it forward: A love story

By Julie M. Aurelio

AFTER HE LOST ALMOST ALL OF HIS BELONGINGS IN the floods brought about by Tropical Storm "Ondoy" last year, this jeepney driver thought it wasn't enough to simply thank the strangers who helped him get back on his feet.

Jonny Hernandez, 48, a resident of Barangay Singkamas in Marikina City felt it was but right to repay the generosity of his benefactors with the same acts of kindness and love he was shown when he was down and out.

"I wanted to do good because others were also kind to me. They helped me out, so why not help them in return?" he told Inquirer during an interview in his unpretentious home at Barangay Singkamas's Riddled settlement.

T2u CH volunteer Jonny Hernandez: Repaying acts of kindness

Beneficiary

From being a beneficiary of the Buddhist-run Tzu Chi Foundation, which conducted relief operations in his community after the great floods, Hernandez and some of his neighbors are now volunteers themselves in the group.

Hernandez now goes on regular relief missions with the organization to other disaster-stricken areas, helping people who lose their homes to fires, floods and other calamities.

His eighth-hole-remodeling home is really low-income families in Riddled, was one of the hardest hit in the city when Ondoy struck on Sept. 26, 2009, flooding Metro Manila and other parts of the country and leaving many dead, lost and homeless in its wake.

To encourage the able-bodied members of the community, Tzu Chi also offered a "cash-for-work" program in which residents were paid P600 a day to help clean their neighborhood of mud and muck.

Hernandez, one of the leaders of a team in the "cash-for-work" program, was deeply touched by the affluence, love and compassion shown him by the Filipino-Chinese aid workers.

With his team, the Marikina volunteer would work all day to wash away the mud from their houses for weeks and he paid later for the hard work.

"That's when I thought that it

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V-DAY REMINDER

Motel operators warned about minors on premises

By Tina G. Santos

MEMBERS OF A CHILD RIGHTS ADVOCACY group yesterday visited a chain of motels in Sta. Maria, Manila to urge its owners not to allow minors to enter the establishments that are usually fully booked during Valentine's Day.

Members of the Ahon Sala Pary Liu recruited motel owners and employees about the existing laws, particularly provisions of Republic Act 7610 (Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act), as well as various ordinances prohibiting minors to go to such places.

Regulations

"We challenge motel owners as well as their personnel to be faithful and firm in enforcing policies and regulations in accepting guests. We ask them to have clear guidelines," said Dr. Joy Alcantara, Ahon Sala Pary Liu committee, in a statement.

She added that the visits were conducted not only in time for Heart's Day but also to mark the culmination of National Awareness Week for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation that began Feb. 8.

Valid IDs

The group demanded that motel owners ask their guests to present documents, like identification cards, residence certificates or other proof showing that their customers were of legal age.

"Mere judgment based on physical indicators of their statures could be subjective. We demand motel personnel to have clear and concrete measures in evaluating their customers," she added.

"Motel establishments should be strict in forbidding or relocating minors on their premises as they won't become accessories to crimes against our children," Alcantara stressed.

The group also called on the public to join the crusade against sexual abuse and exploitation among children.

AIDS awareness

Meanwhile, the Department of Health (DOH) gave away condoms to adult customers at the Dangwa Flower Market in Binondo as part of its "Kapit Lang, Iiy Tuloy-tuloy" campaign.

"It's Valentine's Day and since many will be showing their love by giving flowers, we thought of also giving them information about HIV/AIDS," said the DOH's Dr. Eric Tayag, adding that the focus of their campaign was HIV-AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) awareness.

Free gifts

Customers at the Dangwa market were given "Get your free gift" coupons, which they can redeem at the health department's booths set up in the area.

Information materials on HIV-AIDS were distributed along with the condoms, Tayag said.

Teenagers who redeem the coupons were given lollipops along with the information materials.

A volunteer pays it forward . . .

From page A11

DONOR: Rhap piggy banks passed around by volunteers to be used for future relief missions.

never feel good to be able to help others people. Mahirap sa kalooban. Mas pinipit kasi kapag ikaw lagi ang binabalikan. (It was easier on the conscience, it wouldn't look like if you are always on the receiving end of assistance)," said Hernandez.

Hernandez asked the Tzu Chi Foundation if he could tag along on a relief mission in November 2009 to Dumarland in Sorsogon, a shore community in Castle province not much different from Hernandez's own.

The journey driver initially felt a bit shy doing volunteer work, but was later amazed at ease as he gave away relief goods of rice and fish latas to the residents.

Sharing

"Later, I joined relief missions for flood victims in Bicutan City and five quards in Manila," Hernandez said. "I knew what they had to go through because of what happened to me and my family during Ondoy. I tried to share them up and told them: 'We both lost our belongings, but give it just call it a matter time and then will be able to recover,'" Hernandez said.

Michael Hsu, one of the pioneer volunteers of Tzu Chi Foundation, said he was initially surprised when he saw the "tough looking" Hernandez had a kind and loving heart, even as he was just recovering from his losses.

"Many were initially wary about approaching him. But each time he comes with us to help out in volunteer work, you could really see what a kind person he is and how willing he is to help," Hsu said.

Both were Hernandez's first so that he asked his boss to give him an extra day off from driving his jeepney just so he could tag along during the group's relief missions.

For Haiti victims, too

At a recent street donation and fund drive in Binondo, Manila for the earthquake victims in Haiti, Hernandez was beside himself as he held a box for passersby for donations.

"I enjoy volunteer work thoroughly, and I don't ask for anything in return. I often want Tzu Chi to call me when the next mission comes around," he said, adding that his 21-year-old daughter sometimes joins him in the activity.

Hernandez then pointed out to his son the house of a neighbor, Boy Mercado, that was destroyed during the Ondoy.

"Ngun kami na pinagtulung-tulun gang ginsok ining bahay niya. Ang buot sa puso. Walang bayad iyon. Pero di sa sarili at sa pamilya ko lang ako nag-isip. Kailangan ng mga kapitbahay ko, kaya nandito ako. (We helped out in fixing his house together again as it was buried in mud. We didn't ask for a single centavo for the effort)," he proudly added.

Hsu said there are around 1,000 Manilenos City residents like Hernandez who have taken on the mission of spreading love and kindness through actions, even as they are struggling to rebuild their lives.

"We are very thankful for the extra helping hands. It makes our hearts full to have volunteers like them. We didn't have to ask. Volunteering just came naturally to them," Hsu said.

Hernandez's neighbor, Ivan was the Robert Cortez, who had worked under the "cash-for-work" program, also ended up a volunteer for Tzu Chi, cleaning houses for free in Tzu mona.

Piggy bank

Like the others, he keeps a piggy bank at home, provided by Tzu Chi in which Cortez would drop a fixed amount every day say P1. When it is full, the piggy bank is returned to Tzu Chi to be used for future missions.

"I just want to be able to show my gratitude in my own small way," the 44-year-old vendor said.

Another of Hernandez's neighbors, 39-years-old Arnulfo Espeleta, also volunteered to help in relief efforts for fire victims and flash earthquake victims as well.

"When we asked for donations, we would have mail always say thank you. We also gave out fliers to passersby. It was fun and at the same time gratifying to be able to help," he said.

Seeing their former beneficiaries like Sorsogonon, Cortez and Espeleta committing volunteer work for "inspiration" to Tzu Chi Foundation workers, said Sino.

"The values that have been imparted to the volunteers through the simple act of helping others have changed their way of looking at things," he added.

"Long after we have packed up and gone, we are very sure that the spirit of giving and sharing whatever you can will always remain in their hearts," Sino said.

Approve seniors bill, QC teachers urge GMA

A QUEZON CITY-BASED ASSOCIATION of retired education officials and teachers asked President Macapagal-Arroyo to sign into law a bill seeking to exempt the elderly from paying the 12-percent VAT, provided Senate Bill No. 2965 and House Bill No. 6390.

Some four million senior citizens will benefit from the bill's enactment.

Discounts

The 20-percent discount on senior goods and services, enjoyed by senior citizens today, is actually only 8 percent because of the VAT.

According to a Palace spokesman, the administration is reluctant to approve the measure because it would mean the loss of P14.4 billion in revenues annually.

But many believe that the so-called losses can be easily offset by a rigorous tax collection campaign and by curbing graft and corruption which has permeated almost every echelon of the government bureaucracy.

The Kagayo claims that the 20-percent discount is still relatively small for retired teachers and employees who have spent the best and most productive years of their lives in public service.

Contributions

It is high time the government took cognizance of the plight of senior citizens, as well as recognize their contributions to society, the association said.

METRO BRIEFS

Road accident at QC flyover

A 10-WHEELER truck carrying boxes of vodka plowed into the center island on the Kalayaan flyover in Quezon City yesterday afternoon, causing heavy traffic in the area. No one was seriously injured in the accident, which happened along the northbound lane of the flyover at past lunchtime. The Isuzu 10-wheeler truck flipped on its side after plowing into the center island, police said. The Quezon City Police District's Traffic Sector 3 identified the truck driver as Samuel Garcia. Chief Inspector (CPT) Gerry Gonzaga said Garcia admitted that he lost control of the brakes while bound for Batasan along the northbound lane. "He tried to stop the vehicle by bumping it against the island, but his load was too heavy, so it plowed into the center island and collided with a bicycle in front of the southbound side," Gonzaga said. The truck flipped on its side, as hundreds of boxes of Tru Blu vodka spilled on the road. Three vehicles behind the truck—a truck, a Honda Civic and an Isuzu Trooper—ended up bumping into one another, police said. The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority was still clearing the flyover of boxes of vodka as of press time.

Jaila M. Gonzales

Taguig, GK team up for city university

IN A BID to improve the quality of education in Taguig City, Mayor Freddie R. Tinga has partnered with Gawad Kalinga (GK) in the management and operation of the city-run Taguig City University (TCU). The mayor said the partnership with GK seeks to uphold the city's objectives of providing free high-quality college education to Taguig's underprivileged and deserving students. Tinga, who currently serves as TCU board chair, also announced that he would be relinquishing the university's chairmanship to Gawad Kalinga founder Antonio P. Meloto. The mayor said bringing in Gawad Kalinga and other members in the TCU board would help in instilling a new and better breed of graduates through a holistic education program. A Memorandum of Agreement between the city government and Gawad Kalinga provides that GK shall appoint one representative in the TCU Board and shall establish and implement values formation programs to the university's current curriculum. Moreover, the agreement stipulates that GK shall be responsible in forging partnerships with prominent universities and in bringing into the Board representatives from the National University of Singapore and the country's top-notch schools such as the University of the Philippines System, De La Salle University, and Ateneo de Manila University. Since it started operations in 2006, TCU has gone along way in providing free quality college education to underprivileged students in Taguig. It has more than 6,000 students, 50 percent of whom are scholars. The TCU has its main campus at the Taguig Justice Hall Compound in Barangay Upper Bicutan, and has graduated thousands of students from its various courses and education programs. The university was established through an ordinance creating the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Taguig, enacted on Sept. 6, 2004.

Annabel's for romance

A SPECIAL dining experience is in store not only for couples but families who will celebrate Valentine's Day today at Annabel's, the restaurant of celebrities, on Tomas Morato Avenue corner Scout Delgado Street in Quezon City. Romance at heart will be thrilled by a special international buffet selection at P1,995, or an exceptional set menu of appetizers, soup and salad and a main course—a steak and prawns combination—plus dessert, all this for only P999++. Live entertainment at the garden area is also a plus. For reservations, call 924-40-31 or 34.

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RAMON "BOB-BOB" BAUTISTA
February 2010

GLOBAL Pinoy
Editor Gerry Lirio
E-mail: global@inquirer.com.ph

This section is dedicated to Filipinos overseas toiling on land and at sea, in factories, in construction sites and in the homes of the world to secure a better ... lives. These are their stories.

'Brown guy at Window 3:' Fatal to be bored in US

By Edna Bangan-Sabino

NEW JERSEY—PETER JOHN D JOSE CLASPED his BS in Economics diploma from the University of Santo Tomas and was determined to use it as the master key to the doors of the "yuppie" (slang for young professionals) world. Typical of a new graduate, he sailed the Makati scene with ardent hope. He must now sit down pronto, write his resumé, and send out copies of this to the MNCs, the much-sought-after multinational companies. However, faster than he could say "Ayala Avenue, here I come!" his green card arrived.

That forced Peter to execute a psyche-enforced somersault. He had to re-condition his mind about his job expectations, ascribing every new question, "What will it be like for me in America? How will I pronounce the job market there? Are my preparations sufficient? Incidentally, his priceless hopefulness was changing into some shade of grey that he had to take his flight.

Greenhorn

Six years later today, Peter looks back with amusement at his transformation as a Filipino "working guy" in America. No doubt the process had been double challenging.

His greenhorn status then was a hostile-as-local experience but always been a requisite in most jobs. Add to that the fact that he was a new immigrant and the odds seemed no good. But the P in his middle initial which could very well stand for Jinxl "Perseverance" finally paid off.

An opening for bank teller in South Orange, New Jersey beckoned to him and he doubled for it. He underwent training for "tellering" and his something else besides. His trainer had a huge attitude problem and Peter had to learn not to take it personally or personally file an incident!

He went on to sit behind his window, along with three or four other tellers behind there. As he did so, another greeting reality hit him: The bank clients passed him over. "Why?" he asked himself. "Was it because I was 'different'?" (read: his non-white/not-white-not-black).

Gradually, though, his natural affability won out. Word got around that the "brown guy at Window 3," despite an obvious accent barrier, engaged people in some small talk during transactions. Every now, the bank customers were making their way to his window, and those relished that small but significant victory.

Not-so-ordinary times

When somewhere some, going to work posed several thoughts and hesitations as the young Filipino who was driving in the snow for the first time. South Orange from Jersey City (about 30 km) lived was a good 45 minutes away. Bringing that would be the distance between Cubao and San Pedro, Laguna sans traffic. "Will I get to work on time? Will I be able to see my way? Are my car tires reliable?" were just a few of those thoughts. But his appreciation for his job enabled Peter to dismiss his fears and brave the strange weather (how relieved he was to find numerous other motorists on the long slippery road).

One bumper sticker caught his eye and made him smile: "I own 3 cows, 2 cats, an elf in stock I go." Well into his stay in America, however, he realized that that re-invented refrain from the children's book, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," in fact has a powerful implication about American economics. Wholesale consumption plus unregulated borrowing equals a robust economy" was the long-standing Wall Street dogma until the recent Big Collapse blew it up in everybody's face.

The economist in Peter could see help gaping in disbelief as the disasters in his head disintegrated before his very eyes. Still, he remains cool and relented in the knowledge that this low point has "no other way to go but up."

Always a step ahead

Relative to the other employees who have lived in America longer than he, Peter feels that he has a lot more to do to prove his capabilities at the workplace. It is not enough to merely keep in step professionally, he also has to be at least a step ahead.

Any promotion he has depends on such a strategy. Since advanced schooling is an option at his disposal, he enrolled for credits towards a Master's in Business Administration at the Seton Hall University Graduate School of Business. Juggling job demands and schoolwork calls for a finely-honed time-management skill. Happily Peter is a schedule buff who clicks on a "To Do" list on a daily basis. Now he stands free to climb both the academic and the corporate ladders at his liking. And climbs them he does! He has been promoted to the position of Management Trainee at Valley National Bank in South Orange, a career upgrade that definitely holds brighter prospects for Peter in the near future.

Almost simultaneously, he has been conferred the prestigious Leadership Award by the SJCU Graduate School of Business in recognition of his very dynamic and dedicated involvement with the student investment Management Group, a school organization that encourages students majoring in finance to dabble in hands-on investing.

Staying focused

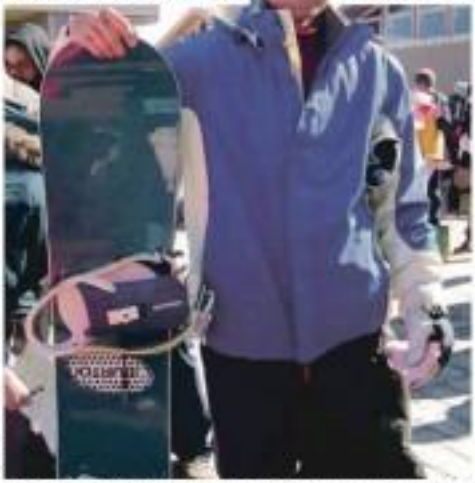
Shamini donors provide seed money for these "non-pay investments" to learn the ropes of the money world. "We are reinvesting for the next generation," Peter says clearly animated, "and we have already made some gains and a few losses in the stocks we acquired." His decision to be a step ahead through the investment route may yet prove to be Peter's best move at this point. That it brings him economic exciting career directions is his every well-wisher's hope.

Perhaps, nowhere is the "stress 'n easy" more shattering than in America, where individual freedom is genuinely upheld and the consensus is concrete it are readily available. In this environment, Peter realizes that staying focused on one's goals avoids the greater effort and disciplines. Fortunately for him, family helps keep him stay grounded. His typically Filipino household makes you to mind every member's business and provide group support when needed.

Peter's diverse hobbies and interests are also focusing tools for him. "It is fatal to be bored in America," he quips, and that is not his experience. Given this impression, "Never-Fail not-to-be-neo-friendly" ambiance, one must know how to occupy his time with meaningful activities.

Beat release and solidify by working out in the gym, running marathons for a cause, volunteering for charity for humanity, bar- and club-hopping with friends, sampling and cooking gourmet dishes, and traveling around on longer breaks.

Yes, Peter is definitely American-busy but with the brainy-easy flair, at the end of the day, gives him a great sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. If there is such a thing as a purpose-driven rat race, then this must be what it looks like!



"I OWE, I OWE, SO OFF TO WORK I GO" Peter John Jose finally finds his place in the US, working as a bank, critiquing and socializing by working out in the gym, running marathons for a cause, volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, and traveling around on longer breaks.

SETTING FOOT IN NASDAQ Peter, with classmates, at the world's largest electronic stock market at One Liberty Plaza, Broadway in New York.

A Valentine story: Immigrant mother's unconditional love for her children

LORNA WAS PACING DURING operation proceedings when she met a US citizen named Jaime. Knowing that her case was already set for a hearing within a short period of time, Jaime offered to marry Lorna.

Jaime is 10 years younger than Lorna, stands 6'3" and is an African-American on the heavy side. On the other hand, Lorna is a petite Filipina, a widow and a mother of three children living, many from her, in the Philippines. She agreed to marry him before the hearing.

When they started living together after their marriage, Lorna began to experience problems with her husband. She was subjected to verbal and sexual abuses. Knowing that she was going to be deported if their marriage would fail, she became submissive to all the demands of her husband.

According to Lorna, Jaime was very sexually active. He always loved her as

IMFO
Lourdes Santos Tancinco

long as they were with him everyday; oftentimes, two or three times in one night. She knew that she could have left him as a victim of domestic violence but she instead decided to put up with him.

When we first met Lorna, she looked tired and devastated. But she assured me that she was fine. Jaimes filed petition for all her three children, and they will come to the United States, inc. He was excited relating her wish to reunite with her children.

Long-time 'TNT'

Lorna's children all live in a small house owned by a relative in Manila. One year after her Filipino husband died in an accident, she decided to try to build a future for them in the US. Her three children were all below 10 years old when she left them in the care of her mother.

Starting her first few months in the US, Lorna was always worried about her children. She was a single parent and believed that the only way she could financially support her children was to stay and work in the States. It was a very difficult decision for Lorna to be separated from her children. What time were good, she had lots of work, taking care of elderly patients in their homes. She lived in a rented room in the Bushwick district in San Francisco. It was not a very safe place. Crimes, especially drug dealing, were very common in the area.

Most of Lorna's earnings from her work were being sent to her mother who took care of her children. Although her work was oftentimes very exhausting, she hardly took any day off.

One night, Lorna received a phone call from the Philippines. She was told that her mother had died of a heart attack. Her children were left with the neighbors as no one was taking care of them. Lorna was crying almost everyday since she could not go home to attend the burial of her mother. If she returned to the Philippines, she would not be able to see her in the US again. She thought of what was to the best interest of her children. She mourned the death of her mom quietly—in the US.

Good neighbor

While she was grieving, exciting and incident happened. Immigration officers raided the facility where she worked. Lorna was arrested and jailed for three days. A friend posted bail for her release. The hearing was then set for her deportation.

Jaime was by Lorna's side during this time. He was very supportive and Lorna admitted proof that they actually lived as husband and wife. The petition was eventually approved. Lorna was granted the green card, a few months before she was reunited with her children.

As an overseas worker who had been separated from her children for many years, Lorna was very emotional seeing her children arrive in the US. Her love and dedication to her children motivated her to do anything and everything to succeed and have something to send to her children. She suffered humiliation and pain in the hands of her husband, but tolerated all that so that the children's petition would be approved and she would be reunited with them.

There are many mothers in similar situations. The sacrifices they have to endure in a foreign land to secure a brighter future for their children often go unrecognized.

Mother's Day should not just be a celebration of love for couples or lovers.

Let us also recognize that Valentine's can also be a celebration of the selfless love that many hardworking overseas Filipinos have for their families.

Readers may be reached at lsan@tancinco.com or at 8057177.

US female professor shoots dead 3 colleagues

AFP Bishop is taken into custody on Feb. 12 in connection with fatal shootings on the University of Alabama in Huntsville campus. AFP

HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA—A biology professor at a southern US campus was charged with murder late Friday in the shooting deaths of three fellow biology professors at the campus.

Authorities say Amy Bishop, an immunologist and researcher at the University of Alabama's Huntsville campus, opened fire during an afternoon faculty meeting, killing the three colleagues and injuring three other school employees. Bishop has been charged with one count of capital murder, which means she could face the death penalty if convicted.

Bishop, 42, was taken on Friday night in handcuffs from a police precinct to the county jail and could be denied staying. "It didn't happen. There's no way ... they are still alive."

Police said they were also interviewing a man as "a person of interest."

Mass shootings are rarely carried out by women, said Dr. Park Dietz, who is president of Threat Assessment Group Inc., a California-based violence prevention firm.

A notable exception was the 1991 rampage by Sylvia Seegrist, who opened fire in a mall in Springfield, Pennsylvania, killing three. She'd also interviewed Seegrist after her arrest, said it was possible the suspect in Friday's shooting had a long-standing grudge against colleagues or superiors and felt sociopathic had not been dealt with fairly.

University spokesperson Ray Garner said the three killed were Gopi K. Podila, chair of the Department of Biological Sciences, and two other faculty members, Maria Ragland Davis and Adrian Johnson.

Three others were wounded, two critically, in the gunfire, which Davis' husband said occurred as a meeting over a tenure issue. The injured were identified as department members Luis Cruz-Rivera, who was listed in fair condition, and Joseph Leahy, in critical condition in intensive care, and staffer Stephanie Monticello, also in critical condition in intensive care.

No students were harmed in the shooting, which is in a community known for its space and technology industries.

Huntsville Lee Stivin told his wife, Maria Ragland Davis, was a researcher who had tenure at the university.

In a brief phone interview, he said he was told his wife was at a meeting to discuss the tenure status of another faculty member who got angry and started shooting.

He said his wife had mentioned the shooter before, describing the tenureate as "not being able to deal with reality" and "not as good as she thought she was."

Bishop, a neurobiologist who studied at Harvard University, joined the UAH biology faculty as an assistant professor in fall 2003.

She and her husband placed third in a statewide university business plan competition in July 2007, presenting a portable self-isolation duty bed invented. They won $25,000 to help start a company to market the device. AP

Tiger farms in China feed thirst for parts

GUILIN, CHINA—THE CHOMO-phrasing roar of the Tiger, which begins on Sunday, could be a busy year for the estimated 3,200 tigers that still roam the world's dwindling forests.

With as few as 20 in the wild in China, the country's tigers are a few gun blasts away from extinction, and in Asia's poachers are making quick work of the tiger population, the world's largest. The number there, around 1,400, is about half that of a decade ago and a fraction of the 100,000 that roamed the subcontinent in the early 20th century.

Shrinking habitat remains a daunting challenge, but conservationists say the biggest threat to Asia's largest predator is the Chinese appetite for tiger parts. Despite a government ban on the trade since 1993, there is a robust market for tiger bones, considered by many to be medicinal and aphrodisiac qualities, and tiger skins, which have become cherished trophies among China's nouveau riche.

With price tolling for $20,000 and a single paw worth as much as $1,000, the value of a dead tiger has never been higher, say those who investigate the trade. Last month the Indian government announced a surge in killings of tigers by poachers, with 80 found dead in 2009, double the previous year. Because figures are based on carcasses found on reserves or tiger parts seized at border crossings, conservationists say the true number is far higher.

"All of the demand for tiger parts is coming from China," said Belinda Wright, executive director of the Wildlife Protection Society of India. "Unless the Chinese change their attitude, the tiger has no future on this earth."

Although conservationists say India must do a better job of policing its 37 tiger reserves, they insist that the Chinese government has not done all it can to quell the consumer market for illicit tiger parts. Antipoaching efforts are haphazard, experts say; China bans the use of tiger parts in traditional Chinese medicine, symbolizes the sale of alcohol-based health tonics steeped in tiger bone.

It is a gray area that has been captioned by Chinese tiger farms, which raise thousands of animals with ostensibly free-ranging.

In addition to overlooking the sale of tiger wine, the Chinese government has funded the market in tiger parts by letting such farms exist, critics say. AFP

AS CHINA ushers in the 'Year of the Tiger,' a massive publicity drive has begun in neighboring India, where the big cat is the national animal, to save it from extinction. AFP

US refuses to cancel Obama-Dalai meet

WASHINGTON—THE UNITED States has confirmed a meeting next on multiple fronts with China, refusing Beijing's demand to cancel President Barack Obama's meeting next week with the Dalai Lama.

The deepening public spat over Tibet, a row over US arms sales to Taiwan, China's dispute with Google and trade and currency disagreements, come at a key diplomatic moment, as Obama seeks Chinese help to toughen sanctions on Iran.

The White House announced on Thursday that Obama would hold his long-awaited meeting with the renowned Tibetan Lama in the White House next week, drawing an angry reaction from China and a demand for the invitation to be rescinded.

But Obama's spokesperson Robert Gibbs signaled the White House would defy China's warning that the encounter would damage already-strained Sino-US relations.

"The meeting will take place as planned next Thursday," Gibbs said.

Obama met with the Dalai Lama when the latter was in Washington in 2009, in an apparent bid to set relations with Beijing off on a good foot in the first year of a presidency which included several meetings with President Hu Jintao.

But he warned Chinese leaders on an inaugural visit to Beijing in November that he intended to meet the Buddhist monk.

China's foreign ministry spokesperson Ma Zhaoxu said earlier that Beijing firmly opposed "the Dalai Lama visiting the United States and US leaders having contact with him."

"I must urge the US... to immediately call off the wrong decision of arranging for President Obama to meet with the Dalai Lama... to avoid any more damage to Sino-US relations."

The Dalai Lama fled Tibet into exile in India in 1959, after a failed uprising against Chinese rule. He denies he wants independence for Tibet, insisting he is looking only for "meaningful autonomy."

Obama's meeting with the Dalai Lama will take place in the White House Map Room and not, as an apparent effort to modify China, in the Oval Office, where US presidents normally meet VIPs and visiting government chiefs. AFP

US laser weapon shoots down missile in test

WASHINGTON—A HIGH-energy laser mounted on a US military aircraft has shot down a ballistic missile in the first successful test of the weapon, the US Missile Defense Agency said on Friday.

The experiment—evoking a scene out of a science fiction film—was carried out off the coveted California coast at Point Mugu Naval Air Warfare Center at 8:44 p.m. on Thursday Pacific time, the agency said in a statement.

"The Missile Defense Agency demonstrated the potential value of directed energy to defend against ballistic missiles when the Airborne Laser Testbed (ALTB) successfully destroyed a boosting ballistic missile," it said.

The laser, mounted on a turret on the nose of a modified 747 aircraft, is designed to knock out an enemy missile by burning a hole in its side.

The project has been touted as potentially revolutionary as the lasers are supposed to destroy ballistic missiles just after launch, when the missiles are moving at a slower speed on a predictable path.

The test could provide a boost to the $5-billion program that has faced technical problems and been scaled back from initial plans that called for building a fleet of seven laser-equipped aircraft.

Last year Defense Secretary Robert Gates canceled funds for a second prototype aircraft and called for more research to refine the weapon. He said the program's value for the later-remained "highly questionable" amid questions about its cost and effectiveness.

The proposed defense budget for fiscal 2011 has an upside funding for the airborne laser but includes about $99 million for directed energy research, Missile Defense Agency spokesperson Rolland Lehner said.

Aerospace giant Boeing is the lead contractor for the program, with Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin as partners.

In a successful test last year, the high-powered laser was fired from mid-air for the first time. AFP

Ukraine's power brokers seek way out of impasse

KIEV—DEFEATED UKRAINIAN presidential contender Yulia Tymoshenko definitely will not run for Rada, but allies of her rival Viktor Yanukovich were in backstage talks on way to order a deal on a successor.

Tymoshenko, who has alleged electoral fraud and refused to recognize Yanukovich as the legitimate winner of the Feb. 7 runoff vote, came under fresh pressure to concede defeat when US President Barack Obama led Western governments in congratulating him on his victory.

Yanukovich has urged her to step down.

But, despite the bad blood between them, the charismatic Tymoshenko may soldier on to her post-vote after he is sworn in as president in mid-March.

She may subsequently be forced into opposition if Yanukovich, who defeated her by only 3.5 percentage points, manages to forge a new coalition of forces in parliament to break the impasse.

In a country where parliament is a virtual place for deputies to trade favors and cut deals, forming a new coalition guarantees intense intrigue and fierce political bargaining.

Rival camps banking billionaire Rinat Akhmetov, a member of Yanukovich's Regions Party and one of his chief backers, hinted snap parliamentary elections might be the only way out.

"It seems to me that we will not succeed in forming one (a new coalition). Perhaps I am wrong. Let's hope I am wrong," he was quoted as saying.

The ex-Soviet state of 46 million, which took a battering in the global crisis and badly needs stability for economic recovery, have prolonged turmoil after a bitterly fought election which highlighted an east-west split in the country.

Yanukovich's win lifted Ukraine bank around Russia. On Friday, after an election dominated by smear and accusation, he left the door open to a possible deal with Tymoshenko.

The 59-year-old ex-mechanic was quoted as saying he was ready to open talks with her, on condition she apologized for the insults she heaped on him during the campaign. Tymoshenko had called him a crooked and a "puppet of the oligarchs."

DEFEATED Tymoshenko defiantly pursues her duties as premier. REUTERS

"A person who would go into negotiations with Yanukovich without getting a public apology for what she said does not have issues," Interfax-Ukraine quoted him as saying.

Her camp has alleged "cynical" electoral fraud and is fuming at a record of votes in about 1,300 polling stations, further adding to the turmoil.

At stake particularly is resumption of International Monetary Fund lending under a $16.4 billion bail-out program.

This was crucial last year for the state's finances but was suspended because Ukraine breached promises of fiscal restraint.

Conflict between Tymoshenko, who is prime minister in the interest of the economy, and current pro-Western president Viktor Yushchenko has been a big factor spooking foreign investment.

This family seems likely to end if Tymoshenko remains prime minister, the only height of time under Yushchenko.

If, as expected, Tymoshenko continues to rebuff Yanukovich's call to step down, she is likely to fall to a vote of no confidence soon. Even then, she will stay on as acting premier until a new coalition is forged to produce a successor. Reuters

TORMER child soldier Boujlem AFP

Ex-teenage soldier speaks out for child warriors

PARIS—A CONGOLESE WOMAN child soldier joined French officials and campaigners on Friday to urging help for the hundreds of thousands of children forced to serve in bloody conflicts around the world.

His testimony marked a day of awareness for the many young boys and girls officials say are kidnapped, drugged, raped and murdered while being forced to fight wars in Africa, Asia and South America.

Lauren Badejoko, 26, spoke of his boyhood fighting from 1997 to 2000—a slice of his country's decades-old civil war—at a conference marking the French campaign group ECPAT.

At the age of 12 in the war-torn Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, "I ran away from home, for various reasons. One day I found myself with a gun in my hand," he said.

"There were kids of 10, 12 years old, being trained like adults... Then it was time to go into combat," he added, its could not give further details.

Discipline was spent learning how to assemble and fire guns and in the evenings, "they indoctrinated us" to fire cause against Mobutu Sese Seko, Congo's former leader, he said.

The French government and the United Nations say there are between 250,000 and 300,000 child soldiers worldwide, many in Africa, but also in Asian countries including Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.

"We are facing a real scourge," the foreign ministry said in a statement marking the International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers.

"These children are recruited and early for fighting, they are also victims of sexual violence and mutilation."

Francois Zimeray, France's ambassador for human rights, told reporters he had seen "tangible results" in freeing thousands of child soldiers in countries including Congo, Burundi and Nepal.

France is part of a working group on child soldiers in the UN Security Council and countries were "financing individual programs to demobilize child soldiers," he said.

"They need psychological support... and sometimes they need protection."

Badejoko was demobilized at the end of five years of conflict in 2002 and was able to swap his weapons training for school and eventually university in France, where he is now studying law.

He would not talk about his time as the front. As teenagers, he and his fellow soldiers "had lots of friends who died around us," he said. "It's easy to get in, but difficult to get out." AFP

The WORLD

Edsa Lorenzo B. Gocco

Swine flu killed 17,000 in US

WASHINGTON—H1N1 SWINE FLU HAS KILLED AS MANY as 17,000 Americans, including 1,800 children, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported on Friday.

The swine flu pandemic put as many people into the hospital in during the normal influenza season...but most were younger adults and children instead of the elderly and it was during the months when usually very little or no flu is circulating, the CDC said.

In a separate study that helped shed light on why so many children were seriously afflicted, researchers reported on four children who developed a serious infection of the heart from swine flu, including one who died.

"CDC estimates that between 41 million and 66 million cases of 2009 H1N1 occurred between April 2009 and Jan. 16, 2010," the agency said in a statement. Usually the CDC goes with a middle number, which it puts at about 57 million people infected.

Between 8,868 and 17,460 people died during that time from H1N1, with a middle range of about 12,000, the CDC said. But between 860 and 1,860 children died, up to 15,000 adults under the age of 65 and only 1,000 to 2,000 elderly.

In a normal flu season, the CDC estimates that 36,000 Americans die of flu, but 90 percent are over the age of 65. The CDC estimates that 200,000 go into the hospital...again mostly frail elderly people with other health conditions.

The swine flu pandemic has affected much younger people.

The CDC estimate shows that between 183,000 and 378,000 people were hospitalized with H1N1 swine flu from April to January.

In an average flu season, about 82 children die in the United States, the CDC says. But from an lab-confirmed cases.

The CDC and the World Health Organization stopped trying to count all the actual cases months ago, since it became clear that H1N1 was a pandemic that would infect millions.

WHO's count of lab-confirmed cases showed that at least 15,292 people had died in 213 countries and territories.

But WHO and the CDC note there are nowhere near enough diagnostic tests to give to everyone with flu-like symptoms to see if they really have swine flu.

The CDC therefore does its estimates based on models, calculated by looking intensively at small groups of people, gathering data on overall reports of sickness and death, and reconciling the two.

Then it also has the CDC come up with an annual estimate for seasonal flu, and experts agree these estimates are far more accurate than counting confirmed cases.

H1N1 is causing some unusual symptoms, in a report published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, Dr. Andrea Bevilacqua of Sisly Children's Hospital reported on four cases of a heart inflammation called myocarditis among children there in just one month.

Most myocarditis is extremely rare and one child died and two required extracorporeal membrane oxygenators (ECMO)...an extreme type of life support similar to heart-lung bypass machines used during open-heart surgery. Reuters

GATES

Gates takes on threat to poor: Climate change

LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA—MICROSOFT cofounder Bill Gates has broken from philanthropic work fighting poverty and disease to take on another threat to the world's poor...climate change.

"Energy and climate are extremely important to these people," Gates told Friday a TED Conference audience packed with influential figures including the founders of Google and climate champion Al Gore.

"The climate getting worse means many years that crops won't grow from too much rain or not enough, leading to starvation and certainly unrest."

Gates said he is backing development of "unexpected" reactors that could be fueled by nuclear waste from disposal facilities or generated by today's power plants.

He broke down variables in a carbon-dioxide-output formula, hoping to set a concluusion that the answer to the problem is a source of energy that produces no carbon.

"The formula is a very straightforward one," Gates said. "More carbon dioxide equals temperature increase equals negative effects like collapsed ecosystems. We have to get to zero."

Gates touted nuropower as more reliable than wind or solar, cleaner than burning coal or natural gas, and safer than current nuclear plants.

"With the right materials approach, it could work," Gates said. "Because you don't (W percent of the waste, it looked like a candle."

Nuclear waste has led into a transparent reactor would potentially burn for decades before being exhausted.

"Today we are always rebuilding the reactor as lot of materials and lots of things that we get wrong," Gates said. "That is not good. With this, you have a piece of fuel, think of it like a log, that burns for 60 years and it is clean." AFP

Major Afghan assault claims first Taliban casualties

US Marines hold a Taliban fighter on the line in front of People on Feb. 13. AFP

MARJAH, AFGHANISTAN—A NATO-led assault force taking on the Taliban in southern Afghanistan claimed its first kills on Saturday within hours of launching the biggest operation since US President Barack Obama ordered a troop surge, as Afghan Army commanders said.

Five militants were killed soon after US-led troops helicoptered into Marjah in the poppy-growing belt of Helmand province, said Sher Mohammad Zaryal, commander of the Afghan Army's 215 Corps.

Surrendering no initial reports. Seven others have been killed," he said.

"Two were killed in one location, three in another. They were killed in face-to-face fighting," he told reporters by video link from Helmand's capital of Lashkar Gah.

As the assault got under way, a suicide bomber struck in Kandahar city, capital of neighboring Kandahar province where the insurgency is also raging.

His explosives-laden motorbike killed a US soldier when he detonated it near a military patrol, an Afghan Army officer said.

Chinook helicopters filled the predawn skies over Marjah as 15,000 troops led by US Marines launched the first major offensive since Obama's new troop surge aimed at bringing an end to the eight-year war.

Hundreds of Afghan, US and British troops had been dropped into Marjah's town by Operation Moshtarak ("together" in Dari), ahead of ground forces, a US Marines officer told AFP.

"At 2:30 this morning, helicopters inserted combined forces into Marjah town," said Lt. Josh Oldshue, spokesperson for the US Marines in Taskforce Leatherneck in Helmand.

"We are now moving forward on the ground and meeting minimal resistance," he said.

He confirmed troops had come under fire from Taliban fighters, believed to number 400-1,000, who have hunkered down ready for a fight.

NATO's International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) said the assault is being led by three Marines battalions, with about five brigades of Afghan forces, aiming to clear Marjah of Taliban and reestablish government control.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai warned the troops to do everything possible to avoid harming civilians during the offensive.

Civilian casualties, though mostly caused by Taliban attacks, are a sensitive issue among war-weary Afghans, who often blame them on the foreign military presence.

Gen. Mohabuddin Ghori, Afghan Army commander in Helmand, told AFP his troops had come under fire from militants in both a mud-walled Marjah township, home to 40,000 people in the central Helmand River valley.

The troops, dropped into Marjah from 60 helicopters, had taken 11 strategic areas, he said, adding: "There are a lot of mines in the area, and they are being defused as troops detect them."

Mushtarak is the first phase of a major operation to reestablish Afghan government control over the region.

The operation, described as the biggest military assault in Afghanistan in the eight-year war, comes after Obama's December announcement of a surge of 30,000 US troops amid his intention to draw down from July 2011. AFP

Contract signing of M'Lhuillier Financial Services Inc. and Gilleran Marketing Inc., for the bills collection facility with (from left to right): Cecilia Lumagas Division Manager of ML financial services, Michael L. Lhuillier-PH, Vice President...Atty. Bienvenido G. Tapia-CEO/President of Gilleran Marketing and Lorenzo O. Rivera- Chairman of Gilleran Marketing.

M'Lhuillier Financial Services Inc. and Gilleran Marketing Inc. have just signed an agreement last February 11, 2010 for bills collection facility to be provided by M'Lhuillier for the monthly amortizations of Gilleran's customers.

Gilleran Marketing Inc., is one of the biggest retail financing companies in the Philippines offering a wide array of products like household appliances, computers and motorcycles. They have diversified further into education and life/pension insurance services.

M'Lhuillier Financial Services Inc., has been in the business of money remittance thru its ML Kwarta Padala brand. Its more than 1,200 locations nationwide will now give Gilleran's customers the ease, comfort and convenience of paying the monthly amortizations of their loans. Aside from wide-ly located branches nationwide, 150 ML hulller locations open 24 hours, providing customers the convenience to settle their bills beyond regular office hours.

Now, Gilleran customers will no longer have to worry about missing their deadlines in paying. With an ML-hullier location within their reach, their prized possessions will now be assured to stay with them for life.

Online dating: Don't smile, skip sexy photos

LOOKING FOR LOVE ON AN ONLINE DATING service?

If you're a man, don't smile in your profile picture, and don't look into the camera. If you're a woman, skip photos that focus on your physical assets and pick one that shows you vacationing in Brazil or somewhere else.

Those are some of the insights that OkCupid, a free dating site based in New York, has gleaned by using statistical tools to analyze how the starring game plays out on its site.

OkCupid publishes the entertaining and perennially useful results of its number-crunching on a blog that has recently turned into a big source of publicity for the company, pulling in new members.

"We're not psychologists," said Sam Yagan, chief executive of the company. "We're math guys."

Yagan and three other Harvard mathematicians founded OkCupid in 2004. In its fight against much bigger competitors like Match.com, MySpace and eHarmony, it has relied a number of marketing techniques, often with little success. But the blog, which OkCupid started in October, has helped get the company's name out on other blogs and social networks.

A post last month that set out to debunk conventional wisdom about profile pictures brought more than 750,000 visitors to the site and garnered 10,000 new member sign-ups, according to the company.

For that analysis, the company catalogued the photos on more than 7,000 user profiles and looked at how many responses those users received from others. It found, among other things, that it didn't matter whether people showed their faces, as long as the photos were intriguing enough to start a conversation. AFP

Clinton back at work after heart procedure

NEW YORK—FORMER US President Bill Clinton was back at work on third relief and doing "very well" on Friday, a day after a successful heart procedure to open a blocked artery to his heart that caused him chest discomfort.

Television footage showed Clinton, president from 1993 to 2001 and currently UN special envoy to Haiti, walking in his vehicle as he left the hospital in Manhattan and arriving home later in the New York suburb of Chappaqua.

"I'm doing very well. I feel very blessed. I was fortunate that, you know, I kind of had a feeling about it," Clinton told reporters in televised comments after returning home.

He said he had felt "a little bit of tingling, not pain" four days ago and "I thought I ought to check it out."

After he left the hospital, Clinton, 63, issued a statement marking the one-month anniversary of the earthquake in Haiti that killed more than 200,000 people and left more than a million homeless.

"Despite its staggering losses, Haiti still has a chance to escape the ravages of the past and the ruins of the earthquake. But we all will have to do what we can today," he said.

Clinton had quadruple heart bypass surgery in 2004 to free up four blocked arteries. The latest incident came after he traveled twice to Haiti to help recovery efforts.

CLINTON

Two stents were placed in one of Clinton's coronary arteries after tests showed one of the arteries operated on in 2004 needed to be reopened...Dr. Allan Schwartz, head of cardiology at Presbyterian/Columbia, told reporters.

He said there was no indication Clinton had a heart attack or any damage to his heart. Schwartz said Clinton could resume his "very active lifestyle" and gave the president an "excellent" prognosis.

Clinton told reporters, "It's miraculous what they do with the stents.

"They just go in and go out and I didn't take any medicine or anything, so I was ideal," Clinton said, adding he watched the procedure on a monitor. Reuters

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Aces go for 3-0 over Kings today

By Marc B. Castillo

TWO UP AND ALASKA COACH TIM Cone should be all pumped up.

But he's not and Cone even talked with a lot of caution heading into the crucial third game of the Aces' best-of-seven semifinal series with the Barangay Ginebra San Miguel Kings in the 2010 Philippine Cup slated at 4 p.m. today in the Araneta Coliseum in Cubao.

"Bottom line is, we've been here before," Cone said, referring to the last time he and his team took such a lead in a similar series—which they eventually lost in seven games in Talk 'N' Text in the title series of this tournament last summer.

"And they (the Kings) have been here before, and we all know what happened in that series," he added, recalling how Ginebra erased a 0-2 deficit to subject the Tropang Texters to a best-of-five quarterfinal series.

GAME TODAY
(Araneta Coliseum)
4 p.m.—Barangay Ginebra San Miguel vs San Miguel
6:30 p.m.—Purefoods vs Sun Miguel

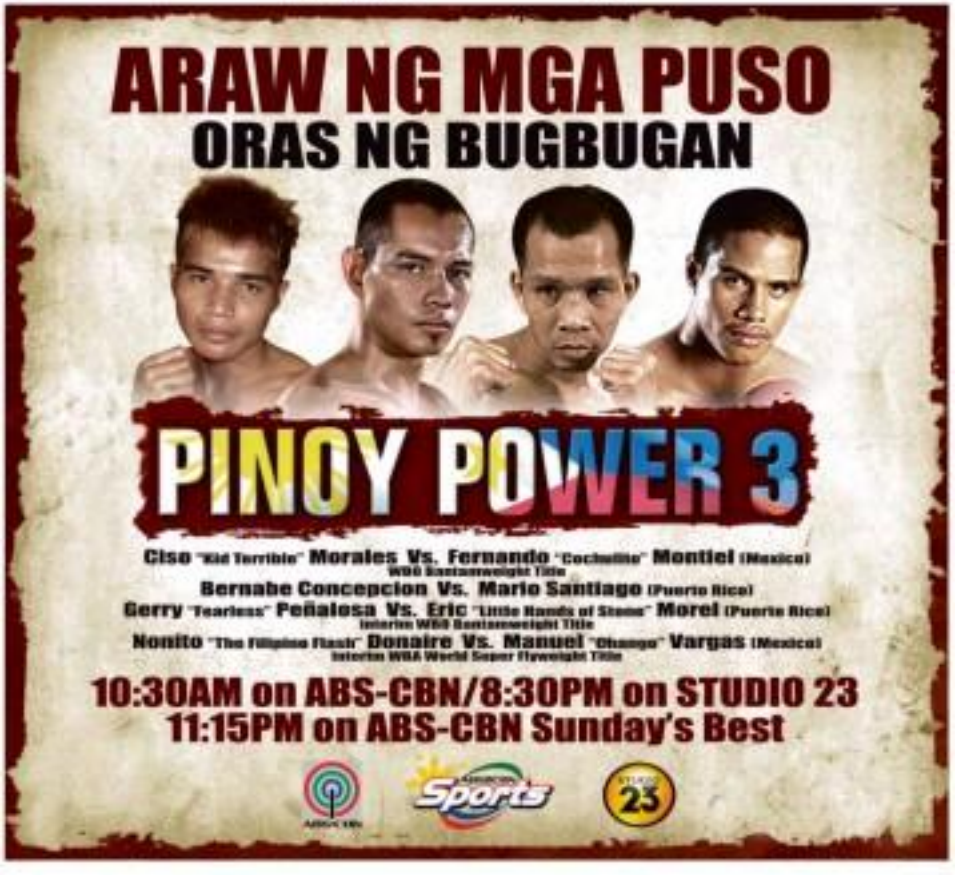
Purefoods and San Miguel, meanwhile, have a 1-1 tie in their separate series with momentum obviously on the side of the Tender Juicy Giants, who crush the Hotmen their worst loss in over a year despite playing without Rocky Ilagan(sic) starting the second period.

Ilagan(sic) was fined P6,000 by the Commissioner for [illegible] two technical fouls early in the second period of the 120-84 win, and despite the fine, coach Ryan Gregorio feels that his star forward being ejected in that game can serve them in good stead.

Winning one more game might be all what Alaska would need to virtually put Ginebra away, and the Aces couldn't get a better chance than today with Eric Menk still listed as doubtful and starting point guard Cyrus Cruz still hobbled by an ankle sprain.

"But having Eric Menk out there is not having our best big man," coach Ang

ACES GO /A28



So rebounds with win vs Russian GM

FILIPINO GRANDMASTER PEGLEY So rebounded with a resounding victory over Russian GM Aleksandr Rakhmanov in the fourth round of the 2010 Aeroflot Open chess champ outfit Friday at the Hotel Gamma Delfiah Moscow, Russia.

Handling white, the 34-year-old Solaire ace took the initiative in the wind, building it out with the lower-rated Rakhmanov (ELO: 2359/1) in a Sicilian middle game before prevailing in 35 moves.

The 17th-seeded In His 2650/1, who bagged the top prize award in this event last year, pestered on a blunder by Rakhmanov on the 26th move and exploited his opponent's queen with a rook three moves later.

When the end came, the Filipino had a queen, bishop and five pawns against the Russian's rook, two bishops and six pawns. He, however, was on the verge of gobbling up Rakhmanov's unprotected rook with 35. Qg8.

The win came after Ito's hard-breaking setback to fellow child prodigy GM Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son of Vietnam in the third round Thursday.

The Cavite-based Ito rushed into a tie for ninth to 33rd places with 3.5 points with still five rounds to go in this tournament.

He was only a point behind Nguyen and another Vietnamese campaigner, IM Le Quang Liem.

The 46th-seeded Nguyen followed up his six-day win over Ito with another triumph over his 30-seed GM Le Quang Liem in 37 moves.

Le halved the point with GM Ivan Cheparinov of Bulgaria in the other featured fourth-round encounter.

National Chess Federation of the Philippines (NCFP) president Prospero "Boyet" Pichay congratulated Ito for his renewed victory in the Aeroflot Open and hopes to do even better when his newly-acquired GM Hyun Mo Barrientos, also with 3.5 points, in the fifth round late Saturday.

Barrientos Asian Zone 3.2 champion GM Darmen Sadvakasov drew with IM Konstantin Sonin of Russia to finally halt a three-game losing skid.

In the fifth round, Leylo Chi 2516) will take on GM Josep Manz Moreno (Ita 2595) of Spain.

FILIPINO Flash Donaire (left) rips the nade at 118 pounds while his opponent, Manuel Vargas, weighs in at 114 lb for their "Latin Fury 11/Pinoy Power 2" headliner today. Also coming up are Lanto duo Cris Morales (bottom, left) and Gerry Peñalosa.

Donaire, 4 other Pinoys fight Latinos

NONITO DONAIRE JR. WILL OPEN ARREAR THE FILIPINO RID for a revenged Rock Latino opponents when the drakes his World Boxing Association super flyweight crown against Mexican Hugo Vargas in the "Latin Fury/Pinoy Power 2" at the Hilton Hotel in Las Vegas Saturday (Sunday in Manila).

The 27-year-old Donaire (23-1 with 14 knockouts) weighed in at 115 pounds Friday, a pound heavier than Vargas, a late substitute for Genaro Hernandez, who failed to pass the prefight medical checkup due to a detached retina.

Vargas (20-4-1 with 11 KOs) lost to World Boxing Organization minimum weight champion Dennis Sierra of the Philippines by split decision last Sept. 12.

Other Filipinos seeing action in the fight card promoted by Top Rank are cobrothers Cris Morales, former world champion Gerry Peñalosa, Bernabe Concepcion and Jason Mohammad.

Morales (34-4 with 8KOs) will be locking horns with Mexican Fernando Montiel (29-2 with 29 KOs) for the World Boxing Organization bantamweight championship while the 37-year-old Peñalosa (34-7-2, 16 KOs) will tangle with Puerto Rican Rico Ramos (41-2-0, 31 KOs) for the WBO interbantamweight title.

Concepcion, being managed by pound-for-pound king Manny Pacquiao, will try to improve his 27-3-1, 13-NC slate when he goes up against Puerto Rican Mario Santiago (11-0-1, 5 KOs) at 126 lb.

Rising star Mickgen (16-2-0, 12 KOs) collides with rookie Raymond Garica (13-0-0 of Austin, Texas, at 116 pounds in the fight card to be telecast live on PPV by Top Rank and will be beamed to the Philippines via MIO CBS at 11:30 a.m. today.

It will be replayed on Studio 23 at 8:30 p.m.

ICTSI Classic at Malarayat Wednesday

By Manuel R. Carrillo

DANNY ZARATE WILL BE back in the title of his only win in the last 11 years when he opens defense of the ICTSI Classic starting Wednesday at the Mt. Malarayat Golf and Country Club course in Lipa City.

The 44-year-old pro overcame a contending to regain the form that helped him win back Master Dimension in a virtual shootout last year, prevailing on the tough Malarayat layout every day for the last three days.

Zarate's victory last year was his first since topping the 1998 PGA Championship of the defunct Edmonton Tour at Whistle Bend so he used a hot seven-under-par 66 in the first round to jump-start his bid.

The 5-foot-8 lefty came out and he actually failed to start his season right after winning the halfway tie in the 6th The Country Club Invitational won by Angelo Que earlier this month in Laguna.

"I just have to play as good as I can," Zarate said.

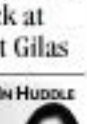
Que and fellow bomber Jervic Reputation are expected to play in Lipa with the Asian Tour visiting a two-week break, and reporting as champion of the Philippine Open Zarate would have to beat the same field that humbled him in the Country Club.

Elmer Salvador, the reigning PGPI Open champion with a one outing, is also in the field like Juvic Pagunsan, Mardo Mendoza, Antonio Lascuña, Mars Pecay and Jade Gurias.

The tournament, the first of 10 P1 million events being backed by the International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI) group supported by MJ Cari Golf Management, Jagger, Land Rover, Strella 21, Bella TV and Golf Peak.

ZARATE

Sampson hits back at Smart Gilas



IN HUDDLE

Bertie Cielo

JAMIE SAMPSON'S OUTSPOKENNESS in a blog should not have generated so much attention and interest among the basketball circles if only the former Smart Gilas import had not deviated from the issue raised by sub-par performances in the Chinese Basketball Association or CBA.

Jamal blasted the poor showing as a humoring injury and cited a previous season with Liaoning where he could boast of more impressive numbers.

I'm not sure how the interview segued to his stint with Smart Gilas, but he did mention that he still has a few contract with the team while enumerating the problems he encountered playing under Serbian coach Rajko Toroman.

***

It's a lengthy blog, but after going through the entire subscribe, it became clear that the main issue was money, which Sampson claimed, owed him by Smart Gilas.

"We still owned money from December, we're in February now and I still haven't gotten it all," said Sampson, who also claimed that Smart Gilas still wanted to keep him despite the team's third place finish in Dubai.

"They (now) their hardest to convince me to stay and work it out. They were still talking with me a week before I left."

According to the caper, because his payments were late, in his contract he was not obliged to play in Qatar or in Dubai.

Which brings us to the matter of his injury. If he was not being paid on time, could it be that he feigned his injury in Dubai to pressure the team to pay?

***

"I tried to play through the injury because I like the guys on the team. They expected me to go out and risk my knee, while I haven't even been paid from the first month.

"The team didn't even nominate contractual things. I had a bigger deal in China, but the team wanted to keep me so they kept signing their offer, that's why the process of me signing took so long. Unfortunately, from the beginning all those things put to the contract to get me to stay weren't met, late and missed payments, and other things promised if the contract couldn't be delivered."

***

Without missing words, Sampson also accused the SBP of being disorganized.

"You have a lot of people doing jobs that they are unqualified to be doing. The whole program is unorganized, and other people in the organization feel the same sense, and have told me it was gonna be like this from the beginning, but won't speak up now 'cause they don't want to lose their job.

He cited the coaching staff, specifically the assistant coaches.

"Do these assistant coaches have the qualifications to be coaching a national team? What references do they have? How can someone under 5 feet who never played in the past in their life be a big man coach? Someone under 5 feet can be a great coach, don't get me wrong, but to be a big man coach and a low post player in the post or even played high level ball? Common sense."

Is Sampson being truthful here? Do we have backbiter in the archipelago's team coaching staff?

***

Sampson complained about sleeping on the floor without a bed for five days while in Manila. In fairness, I think that's probably because there was no bed long enough for him when he first arrived.

Toward the end of his long interview, Sampson talked about some of the things he heard from inside sources.

"I was told by numerous sources that on a team retreat SBP executive Mali Tulfo said to the team that he wanted to fine anyone who got back at the press for what they did to him. That right there says enough. This whole thing wasn't even started for the right reasons."

PSC 'Run for Your Heart' up

By Mac Arthony Reyes

MALAYSIA'S BATTLE MEMBERS OF the national team will lead some 10,000 runners who will sponsor the starting gun today for the Philippine Sports Commission's "Run for Your Heart" to highlight its 20th anniversary.

The race starts at 6 a.m. with competitions in 10K, 5K and 2K.

The runners will take off in front of the Rizal Memorial and finish in front of the Quirino Grandstand at the Food Park.

PSC chair Harry Angping, who is also expected to run along with presidential candidate Gilbert Teodoro, said the event hopes to emphasize the importance of sports and physical fitness.

Sponsored by ITF Corp. of Chino, Pepsi-Cola Corp., in cooperation with the Philippine Amateur Athletic Federation (PAAF), the race will attract feature runners from the Ateneo Law School, Greenhills Running Club, Power Ultra Runners and Philippine Gymnastics Association (PGA).

Likewise joining the race are police and military personnel, different running clubs and members of civic organizations.

PSA citation for Eagles, rowers

By Jarrison W. Faye

IN A SEASON BRIMMING WITH achievements, the Ateneo Blue Eagles and the Dragon Boat Team received hearty hoopes over the of traditional rivals De La Salle University (DLSU) and Ateneo Blue Dragons (ADMU) in the 2009 Cocoa-Cola on March 7 at the Manila Bay.

Ateneo will be recognized as the country's top varsity team after the Blue Eagles dominated the UAAP season and topped the year by flexing their championship muscle in the University Games and the Philippine College Champions League.

Similarly celebrating a banner year, the Dragon Boat Team smashed its own records in the 200-meter premiere open and the mixed category to beat out 24 other countries at the 9th International Dragon Boat Racing Championships in the Tagaytay Center in the Czech Republic.

The two champion teams will be cited by the PSA for their notable sports performances along with race sensation Elaine Pineza, gymnast Lily Ann Cajilig, Ajay Perez, Jessie Khan, women's Muay Thai Jhoo and differently abled athletes Josephine Medina and Ernie Gawilan and the Philippine Olympic Festival.

President Mauricio Antonio has been invited as special guest during the awards night, where the top athlete cast will be honored as athletes of the Year and boxing legend Manny Pacquiao as the Filipino Athlete of the Decade.

Cue artist Robbie Amit, long jump queen Marestella Torres and badminton ace Jean Camille Abella, junior long jumper and Palarong Pambansa record-breaker Lily Ann Cajilig, Ateneo Lady Eagle netminder Alyssa Valdez, Ateneo Blue Eagles Adamson Falcons and Ateneo Lady Eagles Adamson Falcons and Ateneo Lady Eagles Adamson Falcons and Ateneo Lady

NBA ALL-STAR

Rookies snap Sophomores' 7-win streak

DALLAS, TEXAS—Sacramento's Tyreke Evans scored 26 points and San Antonio's DeJuan Blair added 22 with 20 rebounds as the NBA rookies notched a rare twin event a second-year squad Friday as part of the All-Star festivities.

The sophomores had won seven straight editions of the Rookie Challenge and eight of 10 since the format pitting first-year against second-year players was adopted in 2000.

This year, however, the rookies triumphed, 148-128.

Russell Westbrook of Oklahoma City scored 48 points for the sophomores, but his team came up seven points on the second-year team's last by the second year in a row—after being defeated as a rookie last year.

Evans, the league's top-scoring rookie and 24th overall with an average 20.3 points a game, made 11 of 15 shots to go with six rebounds and five assists.

Halftime was celebrated by the first-ever "Dunk-off," a new competition to earn a spot in Saturday's slam dunk contest.

Toronto rookie Dahlan Orthmayer, defeating Los Angeles Clippers guard Eric Gordon.

Orthmayer earned 31 percent of the votes from fans, who voted online and by text message.

In the slam dunk competition on Friday he'll go up against defending champion Nate Robinson, Charlotte All-Star Gerald Wallace and Lakers guard Shannon Brown.

The weekend's activities reference with the All-Star game on Sunday, where officials expect to set a basketball attendance record at Cowboys Stadium, the new state-of-the-art home of the Dallas Cowboys NFL team.

Kobe, Iverson out

Los Angeles Lakers star Kobe Bryant said Philadelphia's Allen Iverson won't play in the All-Star game on Sunday, the NBA said Thursday.

Bryant, who has missed three games with a left ankle injury, will be replaced by Dallas point guard Jason Kidd on the Western Conference roster.

Iverson's place in the Eastern Conference will be filled by New York forward David Lee.

Bryant missed his third consecutive game on Wednesday although the Lakers won at Utah without him.

Bryant sprained his ankle on Jan. 29 in Philadelphia, and the injury was aggravated days later when teammate Lamar Odom stepped on his foot in a game. AFP

LOS ANGELES Clippers' Eric Gordon competes in a "dunk off" with Toronto Raptors DeMar DeRozan during halftime of the Rookie Challenge game in being off the NBA All-Star Weekend Friday in Dallas. Rozan won and will compete in the Slam Dunk competition Saturday night.

Solar airs slam dunk, 3-point tiff

EXPERIENCE ONCE AGAIN THE SOLUTION of the NBA All-Star Weekend, including the highly-awaited 2010 All-Star Game, which basketball TV and Solar TV air the mid-season spectacle live from the Dallas Cowboys stadium.

Viewing pleasure for basketball fans started yesterday with the airing of the Rookie-Sophomore game that saw the Rookies, 148-128.

Today All-Star weekend will hold the 3-point shootout, slam dunk contest, skills challenge and the shooting stars.

Back to defend their respective titles this year are the Knicks' Nate Robinson (dunk contest), the Heat's Dwayne Wade (skills challenge) and Derrick Rose of the Bulls (skills challenge).

On Monday, the best and brightest of the NBA come together as the East meets West in the annual All-Star Game.

Reigning MVP Lebron James of the Cleveland Cavaliers spearheads the East team set to emerge to 146-119 win the West four year in Phoenix. With James in the starting lineup are Miami's Dwayne Wade, Orlando's Dwight Howard, Kevin Garnett of the Boston Celtics and New York's David Lee, who replaced Philadelphia's Allen Iverson, who's attending to his sick daughter.

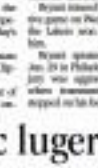
The West will have the Big Spurs' Tim Duncan, Amare Stoudemire and Steve Nash of the Suns, the Nuggets' Carmelo Anthony and the Mavericks Jason Kidd, who replaced injured Lakers' superstar Kobe Bryant.

The East team leads the all-time series, 25-24.

As special treat, basketball fanatics can experience the NBA All-Star Weekend live at the all-Star Festival today at the SM Mall of Asia Music Hall.

Olympic luger from Georgia dies after crash

WHISTLER, British Columbia—Sliding faster than ever before, 21-year-old Georgian luger Nodar Kumaritashvili crashed into the wall entering the final straight of a training run and was killed after being ejected from his unpadded steel sled.



KUMARITASHVILI

Hitting with 146 kph (90 mph) speeds on a 42.6-mile course, Kumaritashvili lost control and his body rose airborne, arms and legs flailing over the opposite side of the track, the Associated Press reported. Kumaritashvili settled, quickly, quickly during conversations and crowds to smooth transactions, officials said.

The IOC and former Kumaritashvili was pronounced dead at a trauma center in Whistler.

Less than an hour after the accident, a representative from each team was told the games would go on. With that, word began flowing across the close-knit sliding world and throughout the Olympic family.

Organizers dedicated Friday's opening ceremony to Kumaritashvili.

International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge said "it is with great sadness that we acknowledge this tragic loss."

Within an hour of the accident, an investigation was opened. Security officials closed access to the crash area and the remainder of the track for the rest of the day, and all further training runs scheduled for Friday were canceled.

Shortly after the Olympic cauldron was lit Friday night, officials from both the International Luge Federation and the Vancouver 2010 organizing committee announced changes to the track, including "a coating of the walls at the exit of Curve 16 and a change in the ice profile."

The statement did not offer any more specifics.

Kumaritashvili's crash was marked on video, they said, concluding that he was offline coming out of Curve 16 and "did not compensate properly to make correct entrance into Curve 16."

"The technical officials of the FIL were able to ensure the path of the athlete and concluded there was no indication that the accident was caused by deficiencies in the track," FIL and VANOC said in a statement.

VANOC also said the British Columbia coroners office and Royal Canadian Mounted Police would investigate the crash.

Men's luge champions, who had been scheduled to finish their training Friday morning, have been given two extra practice runs Saturday. Pioneer's luge Olympians will train Saturday four hours later than scheduled.

The men's competition will open at 1 p.m. (5:30 GMT), as planned, with runs 1 and 2 of the two-day event. AP

Muntinlupa arnis champ

MUNTINLUPA, JUMPED ITS CLASS IN the 1st Mike Arnis Championship held last weekend at the Camp Custer Gym in Quezon City.

The two-day event featured competition in the junior, formal and athletic drill contest as well and attracted 12 teams with Muntinlupa arnis master emerging champions with 19 gold, 4 silver and 12 bronze medals.

Placing second were athletes from Philippine Air Force with 16 gold, 12 silver and 10 bronze medals while Capitol Hill Team finished third overall with 9 2nd 12 medals only.

"We were impressed with the turnout of the first arnis competition after the Filipino martial arts sport was officially declared as the country's national sport," said former Philippine Sports Commission commissioner Jose Bautista. "We're also happy with the results because there were matches of arnis veterans proving that our home-grown talents as equal to this sport."

Victor Cuyo of the sponsoring Mike Bookstore Powder helped Bautista organized the event.

Fern-C hopes to bring successful act to PBL

SISTER ACT: MVP Jaros Hooper shares the limelight with younger sister and Rookie of the Year John after the duo powered UE to its third straight UAAP women's fencing title.

Mendoza rules Guevara golfest

JAKE MENDOZA WON THE OVERALL championship of the 19th Dominique H. Guevara Sr. Memorial golf tournament held at the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club in Mandaluyong City recently.

The golfers' champions were Jesus Siu (Group 1), Mark Lauvel (Group 2), Carlos Reyes (Group 3), Mango Tan (ladies) and Jun Polot (guest).

Mendoza won the hole-in-one prizes put up by Toyota Buendia Autos, Kia Motors and GOZO Inc. Other prizes for an over-par score P100,000 each prizes donated by Goodyear Insurance Brokers Co. and Kingdom Insurance Corp., P50,000 cash prize donated by Alex Pineda and a brand-new Hyundai Eon golf car from DCPI Insurance.

By Top Choice
At San Lazaro LP

MARAWI TENNIS

Alcantara trounces Estanios

FRANCIS CASEY ALCANTARA clinched local bet Rogelio Estanios, 6-3, 6-0, in the first round of the Marawi City Open Tennis tournament on the Mindanao State University court yesterday.

Alcantara, pride of Cagayan de Oro, needed less than an hour to dispose of Estanios and advance to the next round.

Kenneth Babia, seeded 11th, bested Jesus Pantoubion, 6-3, 6-4; Jarvis Dimaguas was whipped another local bet Mohamad Rafid Balindong, 6-1, 6-0; Maestro Alcantara thwarted Emir Cariga, 6-3, 6-0; and Antonio Augustus Manuel Jose Perez-Garcia, 6-1, 6-0.

The country's top 16 players, led by Asian Davis Cupper Johnny Arcilla, are seeing action in the event which offers a total pot of P100,000 donated by Mayor Sultan Fahad "Dax" Salic.

Arcilla, an Asian Games veteran and a member of the team that will play against Japan in the Asian Davis Cup, is still playing at press time.

The singles champion wins P25,000, runner-up P15,000 and third placer P7,500. The doubles winners get P15,000, runner-up P8,000, third P4,000, and fourth P2,000.

Organized by United Tennis Players of the Philippines and sanctioned by Philippine Lawn Tennis Association, the nationwide competition aims to discover players for future international competitions.

"We organized these tournaments last year in Las Piñas, Baguio, Cagayan de Oro and Subic]

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Rose sector wilting under rising costs

By Dolmar Carino
Inquirer Northern Luzon

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—Sweaty from the El Niño heat, this town's cut flower growers always smell like roses on the week leading to Feb. 14, Valentine's Day.

But the thorns pricking through their brown dress days is white every harvest vegetables over. The increasing cost of farm inputs and the dilemma of shifting to greenhouse gardening.

Farmers in Barangays Balsoring, Alno and Alapang here are the town's major rose producers, and have helped keep alliance its reputation as the country's rose capital.

Wholesale and retail traders flock to the markets to haul their orders, and open farm gardeners and greenhouse operators, like that of King Louie Flowers and Plants, fill up the demand.

Most of the big orders come from flower dealers in Metro Manila, even the Dangwa flower terminal in Buenavista, Manila.

For King Louie, its newly packed and well-trimmed roses, tulips, gerbera and illiums are shipped as far as Davao, Bacolod, Bohol and Cebu. The firm has been a major flower-raising player in the industry for the past 12 years.

But as for rainbow, super Bold growers in Barangays Balsoring, Alno and Alapang have off big, packaged orders from Baguio, hotels and big-time vegetable vendors, who double as flower sales agents whenever the season has made roses in demand.

Cristobal is Baldicano, supervising gardener of King Louie at

MORE B2

It takes P20,000 a year to maintain a garden of 200 square meters

FARMERS cross a beautiful harvest of roses of different colors. Fresh flowers from Benguet are delivered to Manila.

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Dagupan's little shoe store now a retail giant

By Yolanda Sotelo
Inquirer Northern Luzon

DAGUPAN CITY—THERE IS A story of a little corner store named after Walt Disney's mouse.

The Mickey Mouse Shoe Store that sold mainly shoes in post-war Dagupan, when people used to wear nothing but "dimeladas (rubber slippers)" and "moro (clogs)," has grown into a retail giant now known as the Magic group of companies.

But there is nothing magical about this shoe store, which had survived both man-made and natural disasters, like fire and earthquake.

Like the proverbial phoenix, it always rises from the ashes and devastation.

In 1948, when this city was recovering from the destruction of World War II, Chinese businessman Marianito Lim established in downtown Dagupan the Mickey Mouse Shoe Store. No one knew the story about the name, but people here said it was to begin to add a little cheer to the desolate city ravaged by war.

Selling shoes in the late 1940s or the 1950s was no easy task as people then preferred their old reliable pairs of "dimeladas" and "moros."

But Lim persevered until the store became the biggest footwear wholesaler in the Ilocos region. It expanded into selling raw staples items and

> 'We see competition as a challenge for us ... It keeps us on our toes'

grew into a general merchandise store.

Fire

But in 1966, the store was destroyed when a big fire hit the city's commercial district.

From the ashes, Lim and his wife, Victoria, established the Mickey Mini Shoe Store that engaged in wholesale and retail of footwear.

In 1980, the couple's son, Benjamin (who would later become Dagupan mayor and Pangasinan representative) decided to expand the business and established Mickmar, the city's first department store.

The venture was successful and Benjamin, buoyed by his success, set up his own business, the Mickwood Sonic furnishing store, which became a household name for fine furniture in the province.

But Lim's pioneering and the store' business the biggest footwear wholesaler to the Ilocos region. It expanded into selling raw staples items and grew into a general merchandise store.

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But Lim's pioneering and the store's prosperity facilities were razed by fire in 1988.

Benjamin, however, was undeterred. That year, he established the first Magic Appliances Center and a supermarket along 40 Fernandez Street here. It was also that year when he married Delia, a business woman.

Earthquake

Since the business was no longer confined to selling shoes and ready-to-wear items and had expanded to appliances, grocery and gift items, Lim coined a new name—Magic (Mariner Appliance, Groceries and Gift Items Center).

But nature again played a cruel joke on the Lims.

On July 16, 1990, a magnitude 7.7 earthquake struck Northern Luzon and the Magic stores crumbled.

The couple, with the help of loyal employees, again had to rise from the rubble to establish a new store they named Magic Center point in 1991.

Now, 60 years later, the Mickey Mouse Shoe Store has grown into the Magic Group of Companies.

Magic chief executive officer Hanh Bryan Lim, Benjamin's son, said the group operates 11 supermarkets, 15 department stores, 14 appliance centers and 18 fast food outlets in Pangasinan.

Crisis

It has branched out of the province, with a family unit in San Jose City in Nueva Ecija and two department stores in Ilocos Sur.

A mall belonging to the Magic Group of Companies. The enterprise has come a long way from its humble beginnings in post-war Dagupan.

The first Dagupenan town where the Dagupan-based Magic did business was Binmaley.

"After that, only sky's the limit (business grow)," Bryan said. He said the business expansion is a product of "taking up lush (results)."

"We just realized that there was a market growing outside Dagupan. When we built the Magic Mall in Urdaneta City in 1997, it was in the midst of the Asian financial crisis and the economic crisis were very high. But we still pursued the project," he said.

At the time, Magic was the biggest shopping mall in the province, and if Dagupan Vice Mayor Belen Fernandez built the CM Mall in Dagupan City.

The two malls, however, have since been outdated by the SM City in Urdaneta town.

Enter the giants

Bryan said the entry of SM in the province was a chill down Magic's spine.

"Who won't be nervous? But it is inevitable that big players like SM, Robinsons and Makro will come in the province. That's expected. But we see competition, whether local or national, as a challenge for us to improve our operations and marketing strategies. It keeps us on our toes. It's very motivating," he said.

Bryan said the Illinois Magic Store did not suffer from the entry of SM City Urdaneta, just a few kilometers away. Other stores have also recovered and started getting more patronage again.

The entry of the big players is only to reassure Magic is expanding appropriately.

"We want to maintain a certain level of volume, and with stores in the towns, we can compete," Bryan said.

But unlike the big players which put up hectare-scale stores, Magic builds stores according to the buying population in a specific town or city.

"We analyze the place and take those [information] into consideration so we can have an ideal space. So we don't open one or five branches, but we put the right size of store that will be profitable for that particular location," he said.

"Besides, SM is not going to open a mall in every town or city only one or two for a province). They get the nonmall market because the entire family goes [there]. But in weddings, when you want to buy only your napkin, coffee, in chair cases (noodles), you don't travel far," Bryan said.

On the home front, Bryan said Magic's competition with CSI is good.

"We were able to grow our businesses well in the past 20 years. With the competition, prices are lowered and we promote makes the big players think twice about coming to Dagupan," he said.

He said Magic helps push economic growth in its areas of operations not only through the business stores, but also by employing locals.

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By Theresa Georgia Diaz-Parco, Customer Development Director, Johnson & Johnson Philippines

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By John C. Cabatic, Regional Sales Director for Asia & Middle East, Hershey's

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FLOWERS pick roses in straw for Valentine's Day.

From page B1

Barangay Laoighog here, says rose harvests dipped to almost 50 percent at the end of 2009. The company's greenhouses were flooded when a tropical depression "Pepeng" raged through Benguet.

"We now gather around 30 dozens of roses per harvest, (before [we were able to harvest] 70 dozens," he says.

King Gosi has steadily increased its rose flower gardens over the years.

It now operates a garden and scalp farm in Barangay Pugaro here, a rose garden in Barangay Gaoghong and another rose garden in Barangay Lao in Bagulin town.

Chit Estanio, a farm hand in King Louis' Pugaro farm, says harvests were conducted three times a week.

"The harvests are not the same because the weather is becoming warmer. It's different if there are rains. The flowers would be prone to pests," he says.

He says roses cost more than P400 a bundle this week. A bundle consists of 24 pieces of rose flowers.

Baldonazo, 38, says the farms' roses were costlier than those harvested in open field.

"It's because our roses are of the imported varieties," he says.

At a retail shop here, Lhen Diba sells roses at P350 a dozen. She says the favorite shade is carnation, which is arranged with stalks and clothed in plastic, costs P150 or more.

"(But now prices vary according to size...P150 a dozen for 12, (roses in) P250 a dozen for long, P110 a dozen for medium and P80 a dozen for short."

Farms in Barangay Balong were spared by Pepeng even as rains flooded those of King Louis.

Marvin Sabala, a rose gardener, says Pepeng did not affect his farm's 10,000-square meter rose farm, although he complains about the overhead costs.

A farmer would need more than P20,000 a year in maintenance costs alone for a 200-square meter garden. He would be lucky to recover this during leisure, Sabala says.

Each greenhouse lens used to cover the flowers costs P1,000, he says. "That's why we are in a dilemma if we should build greenhouses," he says.

He says the risk was whether or not the revenues from selling roses would pay for such greenhouses.

A decent greenhouse costs P400 per square meter and one would need around 100,000 to build a 250-square meter greenhouse, says Diosdado Padua, chief of the Balong Multipurpose Cooperative.

Padua says 90 percent of the farmers in Balong are cut flower owners but only a few have built greenhouses. They relied on their ability to withstand any kind of calamity, he says.

The city never enjoyed buyers from colloring roses, however. This was the reason even a P600,000-cold storage facility for flowers, which was put up in the area, was used sparingly.

Newly harvested roses were already covered by orders and were shipped immediately.

The rose farmers owners many varieties of roses which are distinguished by colors. These are the carnations (yellow with red tips), dendrobiums (pink), roseum (peach), blue cornion (blue), shower gold (yellow) tinted (white) and red velour (red), which is the most popular.

Benguet produces an average of 25.05 million dozens of cut flowers a year. This rose is the province's top products, followed by Arak (1.01 million dozens), Tulsa (696,000 dozens) and Tublay (402,850 dozens).

FLOWERS are bundled before they are delivered to shops in Baguio City and Manila.

A LIGHTHOUSE with a hotel built around it offers a great view of Subic Bay

Subic positioned as retirement haven

By Robert Garnaga
Inquirer Central Luzon

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—TOP OFFICIALS of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority want to grab a share of the growing industry of retirement tourism and turn this freeport into a haven for foreign retirees.

The Philippine Retirement Authority and the SBMA recently signed a memorandum of agreement with the Subic Bay Freeport Chamber of Commerce to market and position the freeport as a prime retirement locality.

The agreement paves the way for the integration of marketing and promotional activities, including roadshows, dissemination, public relations, special events and other retiree-related tourism programs to maximize Subic's market reach.

"The Philippines has almost all the advantages—climate, manpower, culture and services—to outmatch other Asian nations in the retirement business, especially since Filipinos are known worldwide for being highly efficient and professional," said PRA chair Edgar Aglipay in a statement.

SBMA Administrator Armand Arreza said the freeport already has world-class retirement facilities, including the Subic Holiday Villas, a leisure and retirement village that can accommodate up to 500 retirees and their families.

Other similar facilities here include the Subic Holiday Mansion, the Tropical Paradise Retirement Village, Subic Heights at the Upper Bliss Area, Subic Bay Lodges and Resorts at the Shores Area, the Subic Downtown Loft Condominium and Poro A Poso at the Subic Commercial Port.

These retirement communities can accommodate retirees mainly from Japan, Korea and Taiwan, Arreza said.

Execs to travel less with video technology

By Raquel B Dumlao

IN THE NEAR FUTURE, THE NUMBER OF businessmen who travel will be reduced significantly because of Internet-enabled technology known as video communication.

Video communication, which is a cheaper and better form of communication, is an emerging communication platform that will be utilized more by businessmen in the coming years to replace traveling abroad for business meetings, according to Teo Chi Keng, Tandberg sales manager for Southeast Asia.

Teng says video communication, which is easy to deploy, use and maintain, can raise the productivity of organizations by providing efficient and cost-effective communication platforms among the employees.

For example: a high quality video communication technology provided by Tandberg called "Telepresence" is a videoconferencing solution that makes a room become a forum for natural communication between participants who are in different locations with the participants on the video walls appearing almost in 3D.

"Video communication is the next step into the evolution of communication and there should be mass adoption of this technology for companies to experience its many benefits," says Teng.

Teng says video communication can make businesses collaborate more and make decisions fast.

Tandberg is a Norway-based provider of videoconferencing solutions and is currently under the process of being acquired by Cisco Systems.

Aside from the Telepresence solution, Tandberg offers a portfolio of products that include H.323 video conferencing solution (Tandberg MXP H.323 or Ceramic 2700 MXP H.323) solution designed for healthcare applications.

Personal video conferencing products includes the Video VoIP Solution, a desktop solution, and Movi software that enables PC users with webcam to join an enterprise-wide videoconferencing.

Tandberg's solutions are different from conventional types of videoconferencing applications like Skype.

Tandberg videoconferencing solutions can be integrated with the company's existing communication systems like PBX, IBM Lotus, office communications. They also feature encryption (for security) supported video and voice quality, reliability of networks and ease of use.

The power of Tandberg solutions comes from a reliable backbone of networked system consisting content servers, video communication servers, and management suites.

A one-stop training shop

BUSINESS RESOURCES MANAGEMENT OFFICE (BRMO) is the bodyguard for a name that offers effective training programs and learning solutions without breaking the budget need look no more.

The Mendiola Development Center (MMLDC), which is nearing its 11th year as the top training center in the country, is offering itself as "a one-stop learning solutions center where all corporate requirements and demands can be addressed," according to its managing director, Agnes Fidelino.

"We are aware of the challenges faced by HR managers whose companies are reeling from the effects of the financial crisis and natural calamities of 2009. They are tasked to boost their people's morale, to put back confidence in their sales team, to motivate their members into achieving goals—and they need all the help," Fidelino said.

"MMLDC takes pride in customizing program designs and implementation to address the performance needs of an organization," she said.

HR and training coordinators, such as those at the Bureau of Internal Revenue's Tax Reform Administration Group (TRAG) have appreciated the center's hands-here service through the years.

"We always need to update and motivate our group, and MMLDC has been our partner in providing a venue to the conduct of enriching workshops, especially in our strategic planning," (title) officer in charge Norma Lantoro said.

MMLDC offers programs for learning and development, building and enhancing teams, performance management, e-learning and blended learning, and learning management systems.

Its training facilities range from function rooms to outdoor areas designed for team-building workshops and are ideal venues for groups of various sizes.

To start the year right, MMLDC is offering special "HR Pack" (starting at Tues days) rates starting at P1,333 net per person. The package includes a one-night stay in an executive room, (quadruple sharing), eight hours use of a function room, use of computers and LCD projector with screen, internet access, etc., and set meals.

MMLDC is on Samanlang Highway in Indang, Cavite, an hour's drive from Makati City and 45 minutes from Quezon City.

For inquiries, call 8520111, e-mail mmldc.marketing@mmldc.org or visit www.mmldc.org.

Business Features

Partnering Across the Islands to Serve More Filipinos

Metrobank joins hands with PLDT, using IP VPN to link up branches.

Metrobank, or the Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., has a solid history of steady growth behind it. Incorporated in 1962, and duly licensed in 1967, this universal bank today provides a full range of services for multinationals and middle market segments, as well as high net worth individuals. By end of 2009, Metrobank was the highest capitalized bank in the Philippines, with over Php 444.2 billion in consolidated resources, and a network of over 700 domestic branches, 10 foreign branches, subsidiaries, representative offices, 24 remittance tie-ups, and an international presence in 31 countries. Metrobank has and over 1,000 ATMs nationwide.

Metrobank is already one of the largest local banks reaching even remote areas. A majority of its island branches have benefited from PLDT IP VPN connectivity to enable real-time transactions and on-line interbranch servicing, including those of branches in outlying islands such as Palawan and Mindoro.

In a diverse and geographically scattered nation like the Philippines, it is interesting to know that Metrobank's IP VPN is in the capable hands of PLDT. IP VPN (IP-enabled Virtual Private Network) offers both flexibility and scalability, and the advantages of a secure, private network.

Seated (L-R) Metrobank Head of Telecoms Ruth Lee, and Metrobank Chief Technology Officer and President of MBTC Technology Inc. Jose Raymund Melgazo. Standing (L-R) PLDT Product Manager Ian Ignacio, Metrobank VP Head of Telecommunications and Business Resiliency Management Network Management Department Head Josefito Corral, PLDT Senior Relationship Manager Gaby Almeda, and PLDT and SMART Corporate Relationship Management Head Ivy Lagdameo

Delighting the Customer

Popular because of its distinctly Filipino flavor, the customer service of Metrobank speaks volumes about its value proposition. It is the current leader as the bank of choice for many OFW (Overseas Filipino Workers), who trust Metrobank for outstanding performance in local remittances. It is easy to see how the bank stands by its slogan, "You're in Good Hands with Metrobank."

Whether it requires beating strong currents on a boat to reach a far-flung branch, or installing an ATM to facilitate the payroll of mine workers on top of a hill in the middle of the boondocks, Metrobank is clearly committed to keeping the hard-earned money of Filipinos on a secure system that gets to their families as quickly, safely and efficiently as possible.

This dedication to putting the Filipino first also translates into the way the bank staff treats clients, with a characteristic personal touch. This dedication to "Delighting the Customer" is refreshing and most welcome in an age of internet banking. Metrobank truly puts its money where its mouth is.

"You won't see our clients waiting in long lines, standing up. We make big effort to have them relaxed, comfortable, and seated. One example is at our Batangas branch - during the bank's anniversary, the staff was even giving out ice cream to customers in the waiting lounge," shares Ruth Lee, Metrobank's Head of Telecommunications.

Lee has been the bank go-with personal customer service! Metrobank even sends out SMS messages to OFW beneficiaries, informing them when their remittances are available for withdrawal online or over the counter. "Our clients are not mere numbers, we see them and treat them as individuals," explains Ruth.

Metrobank has subscribed to PLDT's IP VPN service convinced that PLDT, with its nationwide coverage and best-of-breed MPLS implementations, can meet the challenge of linking them geographically dispersed branches.

As pioneer Metrobank is one of the very few banks operating in areas such as Jolo, Basilan and Bantayan Island.

Gaby Almeda, PLDT Senior Relationship Manager, says of the relationship, "For almost five years we've seen Metrobank use traditional data networking solutions. Back in 2007, there was a need to attain cost-efficiency. MPLS (Multi-Protocol Label Switching), the foundation of PLDT IP VPN, proved to be the right choice and direction in answering this."

Multiple Benefits

Ray Vergara, Metrobank Chief Technology Officer and President of MBTC Technology, Inc. explains, "PLDT IP VPN, with its robustness, flexibility and reliability, helps us in servicing our clients better and more responsively, whether it's ATMs or over-the-counter transactions, and it definitely helped us attain our business and operational efficiency objectives."

Mr. Vergara explains further, "PLDT IP VPN plays an important role in our banking operations today, as we enable complete inter-branch servicing possible for the benefit and convenience of all our customers. We are confident that PLDT's IP VPN will be able to keep up with our growing capacity requirements, as we implement cross-bandwidth-intensive transactions, such as signature verification and document imaging."

"Last year we started rolling out PLDT IP VPN up North," Ruth says excitedly. Jay Cuplasewa, PLDT Vice President and Customer Relationship Management Head, nods in agreement, "PLDT is in the best position to support Metrobank in enabling seamless inter-branch and ATM connectivity, with its convenient, fully redundant Domestic Fiber Optic Network and with its technical expertise acquired from more than ten years of MPLS experience."

Chances are, on the next long holiday, travelers going anywhere, to Northern Luzon or to far-flung Southern Isles, will most likely benefit from the strengthened commitment of the PLDT IP VPN and Metrobank collaboration.

Sunday **BIZ**

RECYCLED FLOWERS. Made of recycled newspaper and colored cellophane, this bunch goes for P5.

Baguio profits equally from romance and luck

In the Year of the Tiger, jewelry shops are cashing in

KINGS OF THE SEASON. Flower shops made a killing here during the week leading to Valentine's Day. Roses are grown in La Trinidad, Benguet, where farmers sell ten dozens for P240; in Baguio, two dozens sell for P340.

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—ON those rare occasions when Valentine's Day coincides with the Chinese New Year, which brings Baguio businesses good profits?

It may depend on the markets.

Baguio restaurateurs gambled on romance by filling up their hallways with a lot of heart decorations for Feb. 14, believing that dates bring client better luck, says Abiliard del Rosario, president of the Baguio Association of Restaurateurs (BAR).

Food and lodging are some of the businesses that make a killing during Valentine's Day, he says.

But it is the flower shops that are kings of the season. Teenagers shell out P340 for two dozens of roses at the Baguio City public market.

Last year, flower producers in nearby La Trinidad, Benguet, sold two dozens of roses for P240.

Del Rosario belongs to the family of a pioneer of Chinese traders in the early days of Baguio City.

As a rule, he says, Chinese businesses subscribe to custom and would devote some of their resources for devotions for the Chinese New Year.

Jewelry and jewelry shops have cashed in on the Year of the Tiger, a period of some turbulence for some animal signs, by selling protective keepsakes like angel stones, even for as much as P8,000.

Some traders tried to blend the two occasions by selling heart-shaped "Okay" (monetized).

Both Valentine's Day and Chinese New Year work well in Baguio, Del Rosario says, because February is also the staging of the annual Baguio Flower Festival.

Traders hardly ever need to hunt self-their purchasers this month, he says.

RECYCLED LOVE. This heart-shaped piece is made out of newspaper. But it is enough to validate the romance of this middle-aged Baguio couple.

ANGEL STONE. Phalanite, said to be a moodier's gemstone stone, goes for P4,000 a pop.

HEART NOTES. Romantic notes on Valentines' Day cards form the shape of a heart at this fast-food restaurant in Baguio.

IN THIS ISSUE
■ Loren Legarda: 'It's embarrassing to admit–I've not had a date since 1987'/F1

Sunday LIFESTYLE
Editor Thelma Sioson San Juan
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87878
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A LOOK from Alexander McQueen's Fall/Winter 2009/10 RTW collection. The British fashion designer was found dead from apparent suicide in London Thursday. AFP

McQueen gone

"LONG LIVE THE MCQUEEN" declared many of his fans and fashion watchers on Facebook, where news of the death of Alexander McQueen broke on Thursday.

The fashion world was left stunned: The ardent scribe of British fashion was gone. He was 40.

Born Lee Alexander McQueen, the British creator of some the most intriguing and provocative collections of his generation, died of an apparent suicide in his London flat, only nine days after his mother succumbed to a long illness...a tragic end that seemed to reflect his often dark-streaked collections.

People close to the designer said he was deeply affected by his mother's passing. In 2007, he suffered similar devastation

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McQueen gone

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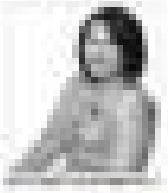

Happy Valentine!

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Endless Romance Fills The Air at SM Megamall

They say that French is the language of love. So this Valentine's Day, say *je t'aime* against SM Megamall's own version of the romantic Eiffel Tower at the Event Center, while being serenaded by some of the country's finest musical acts.

February 14
The Laurels,
Event Center, 4pm

Romantic songs from the talented Laurel clan, featuring Ivy, Ryan, and Cocoy will make it a night to remember.

February 20
Tri-World Piano Recital,
Event Center, 2pm

Young pianists from top schools like Ateneo, La Salle, and Immaculate Conception Academy show off their talent in this grand recital.

February 21
Princess Velasco Acoustics Day,
Event Center, 4pm

Relax to Princess Velasco's laid-back versions of the latest hit songs.

Visit our Valentine weekend events and get a free rose from Holland Tulips.

Also check out
Acoustic Ladies' Night at the Foodcourt, every Wednesday at 6pm.

When you visit SM Megamall this February, you'll be amazed at the infinite ways you can say 'I love you'.

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Infrared monitors have been installed on SM Megamall's multi-level parking system for added ease and convenience. Red and green signal lights help drivers identify available parking slots.

SM Prestige Lounge
SM Prestige Card members can relax at this exclusive lounge at SM Megamall's Department Store, after a long day of shopping. Here, they can enjoy premium amenities and services, including spacious and comfortable sitting areas, massage chairs, powder filling rooms, mobile phone charging stations, free Globe Wi-Fi access, complimentary newspapers, unlimited coffee and tea and tea services, and bills payments assistance.

Breastfeeding Station
SM Megamall offers breastfeeding mothers privacy and comfort by launching the first Breastfeeding Station. There, there are 24-hour stations in SM Supermalls nationwide.

Free Multimedia WiFi
Stay connected to the internet with our Multimedia WiFi access.

IN THIS ISSUE
Meet Shalani Soledad /E1

Sunday LIFESTYLE

How Sea Princess met her Prince

He was the instructor of my diving instructor. We swooned and took the deep dive

TESSA! TESSA PRADO-VALDEZ

"LOVE IS DIFFERENT. LOVE IS blind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." (1 Corinthians 13)

Our Lord must have such a clear concept of love that the Bible starts off the list with patience. When my husband Dennis and I got married, we chose this passage for our first reading because it was exactly how we felt we would develop the kind and honest bond we'd to survive the rigors of marriage.

As we celebrate our 15th Valentine's Day together, it's getting more and more difficult to come up with exciting surprises for our number. Dennis has been so busy lately that he has zero time for golf, so unlike previous years, we are not celebrating VD 2010 along with the golfers from the Manila Golf Golden Tee.

That's a bad thing, because at this year's Golden Tee, my father Alex Prado did a hole in one and won a Jaguar. And when Dad wins, he is so generous that I'm sure he will share his blessings with all the golfers at the Golden Tee dinner. Congratulations, Dad!

On the other hand, it's a good thing that this year, V Day also falls on the Chinese New Year, so we have a double celebration over the weekend. We are with family and friends sharing love stories and long-shot tips.

This year must be a lucky year to get married for a lot of new couples. I asked some of them how they met and fell in love. It was all so romantic to hear the starry-eyed girls recount how crazy they were about the men of their dreams.

Coyiuto-Cheng nuptials

On the first Sunday of 2010, Alexandra Peter Coyiuto and Jaimielyn Cheng tied the knot in the century old Basilica de San Sebastian. Their love story was designed by fate as they circled around the same social scene and yet never met until they were both seniors in college.

When they finally did meet, it was love at first sight. Alex and Jam embarked on the Junior Year Abroad program of the Ateneo School of Management, spending a semester at the University of San Francisco. Where Alex set his eyes on Jam, it was more than a meeting of brilliant academic minds. They both felt their hearts beat faster. Such is

HOW SEA PRINCESS /E4

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LOVELY young Philstar couple with principal sponsors

HANDSOME groom Richard with bride Richelle's sisters Agnes and eldest Vanessa, Stephanie and Kimberly

NEWLYWEDS Richard and Richelle Michael with their principal sponsors

How Sea Princess met her Prince

From page D1

SEA PRINCESS with Richard and Richelle Michael

sweet, young love.

The proud parents of the groom, Peter and Elena Gopiotco of Pres Lib Pramerial, as well as the parents of the bride, Larry and Joan Cheng, shared everyone happiness as they all celebrated in a fabulous dinner reception at HBC First.

Newlyweds' first Valentine's

Valentine's Day for newlyweds' scientist-by-counselor Richard Michael and budding architect Richelle Singson is really special. After five years of being together, Richard proposed on VD 2006 at Mesa Chalet, a quaint Swiss restaurant in Antipolo.

More memorable was when Richard asked his future father-in-law, Undersecretary Chavit Singson, for his daughter's hand. As the apex of the moment, he was told to just get into the Governor's plane and fly off to Vigan, Ilocos Sur for an overnight stay.

Richard and Richelle's wedding at St. James Parish could be the most pulcritudy star-studded among and among Tuesday, headed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Vice President Noli de Castro. Gorgeous movie Bel Michael and Agnes Antonio helped entertain the over 500 guests that included Philippines' pride Manny Pacquiao with his wife Jinkee, Koibito and Bong Bong Marcos, Governor Fel Angara, Dbk Escudero and Miguel Zubiri, and Presidential candidate Manny Villar with his wife Cynthia, and Gilbo Teodoro.

At the Sofitel reception in Symbiosis Garden, the love line came from the groom. He said that after meeting Richelle's father along with his bodyguards, he said that beyond the initial fear, his own wife and all her family came first. I must say: Love conquers all!

UNDERSECRETARY Chavit Singson dancing with daughter Richelle

Romance on cyberspace

Another newlywed couple, Carl and Irene Ang, has a love story founded in cyberspace. From a classroom in IMS in Friendster, they remained "tech-friendly" for around three years before eventually having a relationship for another six years.

From their chance meeting on the Chatroom theater that Carl's father Joseph Ang organizes, the couple soon know that they wanted to be more than web friends. On the eve of Christmas of 2006, Carl took Irene a secret, ended over through her Friendster account that was decoded as "Will you marry me?" And as they say, the rest is history.

BEST MAN Ricky with groom Richard and mom Del Michael

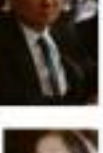
THE NEWLYWEDS with their parents Lawrence and Joan Cheng, Jennelyn and Alexander Peter Capuno, Elena and Peter Capuno

ALEXANDER Peter and Jennelyn Cheng Capuno

KIT ZOBEL and godfathers Fernando Zobel de Ayala and Eugenio Lopez III

GODFATHERS Andrew Tan and Henry Sy Jr.

CYBERSPACE romance for newlyweds Carl and Irene Ang


EVENTS planner Bangs Zaldivar

PRETTY bridesmaids Michelle Paula Ang, Sea Princess and Kathleen Sy

Caroline Grey and Avery did threads make for a very different story. Their relationship was made on a football field nine years ago. Both initially played for the Men and Women's football varsity team of La Salle Bay, and in 2003, took the league per-year their passion by putting up a football school, Futbol Fanatics Soccer Camp for kids. Despite told them it wouldn't be a good idea to get into business with your partner, but through football they became a great team.

Avery's proposal was sweet and unexpected! Caroline got a text from that to go to her parents and open her Valentine's gift. She had wrapped herself in a box as he waited to surprise her on his knees with a wedding ring. With tears running down her face, Caroline happily agreed to be his new bride. She was even more happy that he didn't have to ride the box, wearing 20 minutes for her to get to the garden. Now, that has to be one of the most original and priciest V Day gifts ever.

Love underwater

Many have asked why I am called the Sea Princess. Well, my scuba diving instructor Gigi Tondon gave me that name after we were almost abducted by my parents while swimming underneath the SEA Signature in the area around 500-feet back in the mid-'90s. I was supposed to be offered to the pirates as bait...Like Sea Princess!

Shortly thereafter I met Gigi's own scuba instructor, who turned out to be Dennis. After a few dive trips, he invited me to watch an opera in Hong Kong, and two months after, we got engaged. E was all such a whirlwind, as if I had been captured by a Hong Kong pirate!

Love is indeed...love is kind, but most of all love is romantic. Happy Valentine's Day and may all your romantic dreams last forever!

E-mail the author at sugarmom@inquirer.com.ph.

Shakey's Opens 110th Restaurant-The Biggest In The World

This year Shakey's celebrates 26 years of Fun, Family and Pizza. It also opened the biggest Shakey's restaurant in the world at Quezon Avenue, its 110th restaurant in the Philippines!

Through the years and true to its commitment, it seems Shakey's has been opening restaurants right and left – as a matter of fact, it opened 14 restaurants in 2009 alone! That's almost one restaurant per month! Awesome is right!

Other new restaurants are Marquee, which opened the same day, the Boston Avenue restaurant the very next day, Alabang Town Center which welcomed its first guests on February 5! Restaurants around the country will be opening by the end of the month as well. This is a reflection of the Shakey's brand and how this brand makes its presence felt in the market.

Shakey's restaurants are located in key cities nationwide and at the most popular and busiest vacation spots in the country such as Boracay, Baguio, Tagaytay, Batangas, Laguna, Cebu and Davao. It's tremendous expansion is a reason for them to get to be present in every part of the country. The way Shakey's is growing, there's no doubt that you will be attended nearer than expected.

The rapid growth of Shakey's restaurants manifests the company's maturity and resilience amidst a highly competitive industry. However, its surprising name owner may be attributed to new restaurant openings but to vertical sales, as well. This was achieved through its aggressive and consistent marketing campaigns implemented by the marketing team's dependable and professional with its goals, working closely with a very respected team of [illegible].

Food, once tried, will always be something to look forward to at Shakey's restaurant offers a variety of food choices for everyone in the family. Students will always come back to try food not yet tasted the first time around. And whether it's the famous thick-crust classic Thin Crust Pizza, the awesome-tasting Chick 'n Crispy, or the mouth-watering Rice Meriendas they know that they're getting a fantastic treat from Shakey's.

Also all of these testimonies by the country's love affair with its signature pizza, Shakey's Thin Crust Pizza. Definitely, this will most likely be history days.

Shakey's celebrates 26 years of pizza parlor fun and in honor of the original Ilocos Sur's Boston Avenue branch. Visit the biggest Shakey's restaurant in the world during Quezon Avenue in the city, Call Family Pizza Restaurant for fast and efficient delivery, please call 721 111 and remember, it's the FUNNIEST.

Mister Donut

Belgian Bites
A special chocolate treat for your special someone!
only P100

Sunday LIFESTYLE

THE LOVE STORY PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT

Meet Shalani

'Do you know what you're getting into?' her mother asked her. She does—but in her own quiet way

STAR LAYER Soledad photographed by Jun de Leon for Look Magazine March-April issue

By Inquirer Lifestyle

It's a simplicity instantly evident in the way she dressed up. That Thanksgiving lunch, she was in skinny denim jeans and white cotton lace tops, with no accessories except for diamond stud earrings—and most obvious of all, a thin black band tenuously with yellow lettering traced in dim-mood glitter. The lettering reads "boy."

Denim jeans, tees or cotton blouses/dresses, that boy black bracelet—you'd discover later—are her regular style. Thin, and no makeup, not even lip gloss.

We'd also learn that's most involved in, if not passionate about, are things...Beyond and politics, particularly the people it brings. Not only is she one admit of people, she, relatively young as she is, apparently loves people.

This may why she took up Human Resources Management at the College of Saint Benilde, and, even while in college, worked in the media office of Sen. Phillie Lacson and the UNTV channel.

As Valenzuela City councilor, she enjoys making the obligatory rounds of wakes, weddings, baptisms and other community socials. She has more than 40 godchildren (from baptism)—and keeps track of each of them.

At a wake, her friends say she can stay on for hours just talking to the bereaved and joining the table games. Her warm, honest gentleman Miss Soledad, still chuckles at the sight of his niece enjoying lugao served at the wake.

Memorable project

To her, what was memorable in her five years as councilor—that's on her third and final term—was her project on early child development.

"We studied and monitored the development of kids in the community, starting with nutrition, brain development," she said. She sounded as if she truly enjoyed the small other girls her age (23 at the time) would consider costly.

It was also her love of meeting people that led her to a Boss meeting with Senator

DNA Colour Codes Collection

In the beginning there was SWATCH, the revolutionary fashion watch that took the world by storm. The new creation was a watch of many colours. It was affordable, precise and made from plastic. Plastic? A Swiss watch made from plastic? Absolutely. That's where it all began—a plastic watch of many colours. That's the SWATCH DNA. In other words, it's genetic.

What makes SWATCH unmistakably different remains in the heart of its identity. And this identity is embodied in Derek & Angelica as they represent SWATCH DNA's personal style: active, fun and creative. It's in their genetic code that manifests in their colourful lifestyle. For Derek & Angelica, it's who they really are and who they want to be.

SWATCH returns to its roots by introducing the SWATCH Colour Codes Collection, each comes with a shiny plastic strap in a single, solid colour with matching case and dial. Another version features watches with plastic straps in solid colours in matte surface and white dials with coloured numerals and index.

And since SWATCH is all about creation, art is its origin. From the very start, SWATCH has been collaborating with creative people—from graphic designers, architects, photographers, poets, and visionaries. This has been the core value of SWATCH and with the advent of the new collection, SWATCH can really say that they have gone full circle and they are truly, madly, deeply in love, and at home with its perseverance and pop culture legacy. After all, it's all about the DNA.

So, here it is – the SWATCH Colour Codes Collection. Enjoy!

Get a FREE SWATCH Colour Codes bag for every P5,000 single receipt purchase.

Not valid with any other existing sales promotions. Colors are subject to availability. Valid until March 31, 2010.

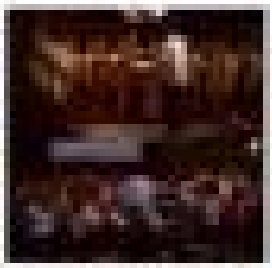
SWATCH STORES: SM Megamall • Glorietta 4 • Greenbelt 5 • Trinoma

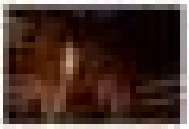
SWATCH KIOSKS: SM Mall of Asia • SM City North EDSA • Greenbelt 3 Mall • Shangri-La Plaza • Robinson's Place, Manila • Sta. Lucia East Grand Mall • Festival Mall • Ayala Center, Cebu

MIX IT UP WALL UNITS: Ayala Malls Vista Verde, Ayala SM Cebu • Ayala Marquee Mall, Angeles, Pampanga

Meet Shalani

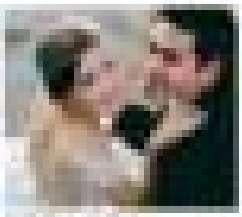
35th INTERNATIONAL BAMBOO ORGAN FESTIVAL

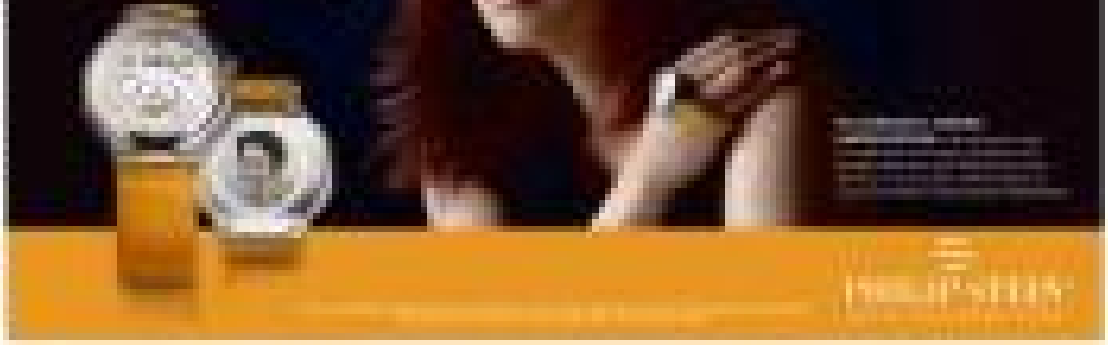




IN HER OWN WORDS

I've always been fascinated with people





COME AND CELEBRATE WITH US TODAY

LOVE AND LUCK IN THE YEAR OF THE TIGER

Feel the glow of love all over again as you share with your special someone the romantic ambience we have created for you this Valentine.

THANKSGIVING MASS Couples who attend the mass will be administered a special blessing in selected malls.

HEARTS IN HARMONY
The engaging sounds of romance fill the air as popular celebrities perform live.

Juris & Top Suzara
Feb 14 • SM City Bicutan

Gerald Santos & Marierra Garcia
Feb 14 • SM City Sucat

Bugoy Drilon & Liezel Garcia
Feb 14 • SM City Lipa

Mark the start of a most auspicious new beginning. Bring your family and friends to celebrate Chinese New Year at SM Supermalls.

LUCKY ANG PAO TREE
Hanging red envelopes contain treats that bring good vibes and prosperity.

SM City Bicutan • SM City Sucat SM Southmall • SM City Taytay SM City Baguio • SM City Batangas	Feb 14
SM Supercenter Molino	Feb 14-17
SM City Dasmarinas SM City Iloilo	Feb 14
SM City Marikina SM Supercenter Valenzuela	Feb 14

ORIENTAL FAVORITES COOKING DEMO
Noodles, dumplings, stir-fried veggies, and so much more get VIP treatment from master chefs of the east.

SM City Marikina	Feb 14-21
SM City Clark	Feb 14

DANCES OF CHINA
A cultural presentation rich in history and color by the Philippine Tiong Se Academy.
SM City Manila Feb 14

THOUSAND PETAL SHOWER When the clock strikes 8 on February 14, rose petals will shower the Main Atrium of SM City Pampanga.

Valentine's Treat at SM Foodcourt • Feb 13 - 21
Get one 1½ Free Nestea Tumbler with every single receipt purchase of a Valentine Meal worth P200, inclusive of Mang Inasal Bihon Bilao.

CINEMA Get a P50 Movie Discount Card for a minimum P150 receipt purchase at Major Scout at SM Cinemas & SM Cinema Snack Time nationwide.

BOWLING Enjoy glow-in-the-dark bowling this February at the SM Bowling Center.

Cyber Valentine Caravan
are held all weekends of February in all Cybercore branches.

Get an SM Storyland Lucky Ang Pao with a Buy one Get one Ride Coupon FREE for every:

- Ride All You Can Tag purchase at SM Storyland on Feb 8 to 28.
- P1000 food purchase at participating SM Foodcourt tenants from Feb 8 to 28.

Leave out for SM Storyland's Lucky Ang Pao at the Mall's Ang Pao Tree.

STORYLAND

Foodcourt Lunar, super Chinese delicacies will be featured at SM City Manila, SM City San Lazaro, SM City Cebu, and SM City Bacolod.

VALENTINE VIBES
String quartets and instrumentalists perform mellow and relaxing ballroom music.

VALENTINE SERENADE
Popular balladeers and duets render a repertoire of romantic melodies.

YUAN XIAO LANTERN FESTIVAL
The exuberant celebration that highlights the end of the Chinese New Year with families celebrating it's every step.

DRAGON AND LION DANCE
An integral part of Chinese festivities for thousands of years, the Dragon and Lion Dance symbolizes the chasing away of negative energies and bringing in positive ones.

FENG SHUI TIPS
Master geomancers offer tips on how to live life to the fullest potential through the harmonious placement of one's living and working environment.

SM SUPERMALLS
A development of SM Prime Holdings, Inc.

'It's embarrassing to admit–I've not had a date since 1987'

ON THE EVE OF HER 58TH birthday, Sen. Loren Legarda had brought her hair down, the way she looked when she was a prominent TV journalist in the late 1980s. Usually seen in the senate hall with hair slickly upswept, she was wearing it down now for a luncheon with Liberty in a Japanese resto at Greenbelt 5.

She said she seldom went to the salon to have her hair done, and rarely used makeup. She was clad in khaki pants and seashell-embellished Jade blazer mid-calves in softness, a spirited color—which she said was her lucky, and, of course, campaign...color.

It's hard to imagine such a frail-looking woman flourishing in the dog-eat-dog life of politics. But evidently Legarda does, considering where she is in now after less than two decades in the Philippine Senate.

The eldest and only girl of three siblings, Legarda was born to Antonio Cabrera Legarda and Gloria Sella Montaño, in a family that traces its roots to Lapulapu and Anigue. Great-grandfather Potenciano Cabrera was Lucena's first mayor; great-grandpa Vicente Sotto was Antique governor; great-grandmother Mrs. Guevara was the founder of the Visayan shoe industry; while grandfather Joel Montaño was a pillar of Philippine journalism.

A common local girl, having spent her formative years at Assumption, the young Loren was plunged into the sophisticated manliness when she took up Broadcast Communications in the University of the Philippines (before it redefined).

Toward the end of the nineties, the senator-started gunning on Vitamin Created combination dubbed with chocolate sauce and sandwiched between graham crackers). She said she ate anything but is conditionless.

What's your beauty regimen?

Wala. People think I'm glamorous and rich, but ask my makeup artist. Ako ba'y kaeskuhan? (Turns to her makeup artist, who's been with her for 20 years, she says.)

You've never had anything done on your face, not even a facial?

Wala akong time-a. Pati nga ito (says she pulsed to silence her ear-infused fingernails). Di ba'e make-up artist Nagpapeke ko tayo? So (bang bahay ko)? "Yung nuno? (Tilted pa, nuno..." (mirrors the make-up-stained, Nagpapeke pka nagpapagupit ng bahok in once a year. Ang ating dream ay bahay, yung magpa-hot oil.

Even when you were a journalist?

When I was on TV, I was working the whole day. At night, I was doing the news. Weekends, I had shoots, and I had children.

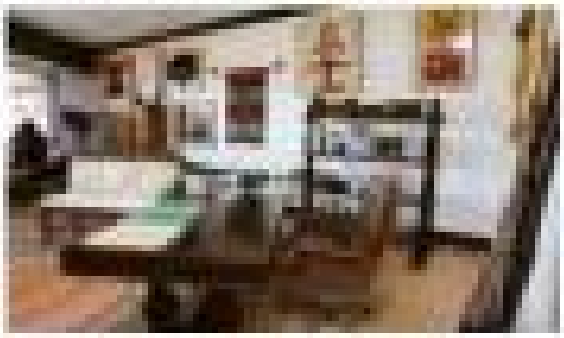
How do you maintain your skin?

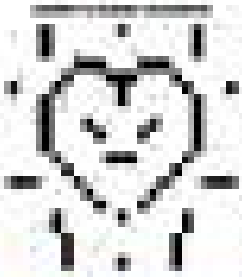
When I was 15, I was the first model of Ponds cream—in 1975. At 50, I still use it to remove my makeup. To clean my skin, I use Clinique Clarifying Lotion No. 1 for normal skin. Yan, mga moisturizer, pur ng palito-lito, depende kung naghihipalo ako. I am not a maniac, kung minsan makasalo sa hotel-sa-umpisa just-so. In the tho.

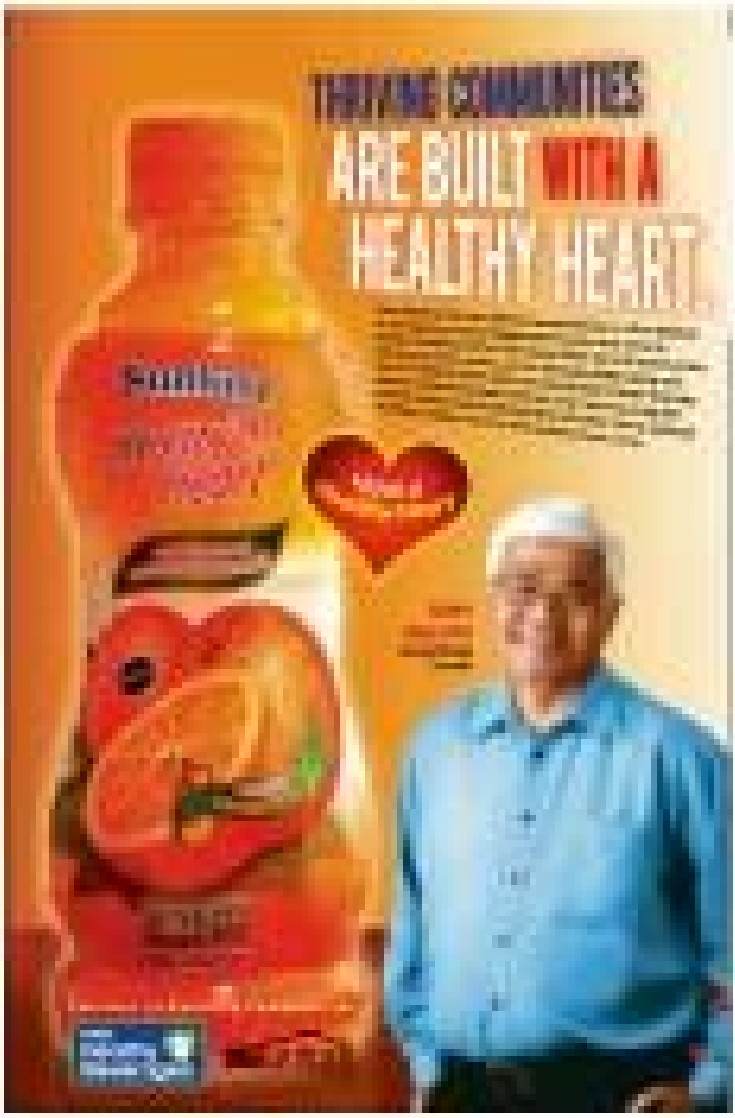
For third Cleritz, Za Prieto or Aneng sneering regent so akin. I don't have the luxury to go to Rustan's to shop. So my friends who are fellow oCitizens...nadagdi ako sa bahay or it—with its regulation sipo so long ako. And make sureare regulator ako, nakatotolak lang dyan. Like, ingudi, ano'ng ano ahong-rainbrull from Linens. Tsaing, I had a 6 sem. and a 7 sem. meeting with Joe Yamo for radio. So I just chose

TTYSDMAMLSENC (C)

'It's embarrassing to admit. . . .



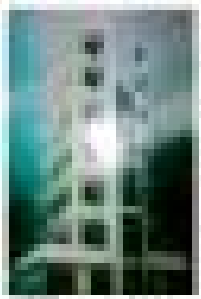




Pope John Paul II T

Powered by
FINETECH
Gusto mo ba ng bagong GEL PEN?

...ver rises in Bacolod



Hardware Workshop's Anniversary Specials

Shop and Get a Chance to Win a Toyota Vios

Every P500 single or accumulated purchases entitles one to win a Toyota Vios

Hardware Workshop celebrates its 19th Anniversary with its Special Anniversary Offers promotion, which is ongoing until February 28, 2016. There are great savings and discounts on Akari electrical devices, Ikhaa lighting fixtures, Edge items, and Panther AVR/UPS, as well as Rosco and Watertec bathroom fixtures.

You'll have great savings on everything you need for home improvement and safety like Cord adhesives, Fixon Hooks, Sentry Locks, Cybertec electronic devices; as well as products for clean homes - Pioneer chemicals, California Scents car fresheners, Homelife deodorizers, and Simple Green cleaning solutions.

To thank loyal Hardware Workshop shoppers, every P500 single or accumulated purchase until March 31 entitles one to a raffle coupon and chance to win a Toyota Vios. You can double your chances for winning when you use your SM Advantage, Prestige, BDO Credit and Rewards Cards. Shoppers at ACE Express Broadway and ACE Express Cubao can also join.

Hardware Workshop's Special Anniversary Offers Promotion is sponsored by Akari, Ceres, Firefly, Cool Air, Union, Sentry, California Scents and Road Master. Join in the fun now at Hardware Workshop stores at SM Department Stores in Harrison Plaza, Quiapo, Sta. Mesa, San Lazaro, Sucat, Manila, Division, Southmall, Marikina, North EDSA, Fairview, Taytay, and the SM Mall of Asia.

In the provincial areas, these are located at ISM Department Stores in the ISM malls in Iloilo, Baguio, Lipa, Dasmariñas, Clark, Pampanga, Pavilion, Balibago, Batangas, Lucena, Sta. Rosa, Rosario and Cebu. Hardware Workshop branches are also located at Savemore branches in Taytay and Marcos, as well as ISM Supermarket Mega.

Add bathroom fixtures to your home like these Rosco Multiple Function Massage Shower Sprayer Series 5m & Rosco Valve Faucet with Telephone Shower

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Akari Multifunction Rechargeable Lantern

Eliminate the odors from smoke, pets, and food spills in your car with these California Scents Odor Eliminators

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IN THIS ISSUE
■ How Sea Princess met her Prince /D1

Sunday LIFESTYLE Relationships

Unsealing my lips on Manila's lovers

But only on Valentine's

JESSICA Guevara and Richard Brestigham

By Maurice Arnache

ALL SET TO SAY THEIR "I DO'S" ON APRIL 8 in Hunter Valley, Australia, is the beautiful Jessica Guevara, VP of GL Group Property Holdings Inc., whose Prince Charming is Richard Brestigham, businessman and director of GCH Landscaping Design.

Tycoon Claudio Colmenares and Southern beauty Gretchen Oppen's son, former congressman of Negros Occidental Chas Colmenares, is a widower who's been smitten by former beauty queen Carol Gavin. That exquisite couple has been an inseparable sight.

For every happy love story, there are unhappy ones. And there are those that become a game of misery and survival.

Shocking admission

The gorgeous beauty, known for her splendid cheekbones and true charm, got engaged to one of our town's most eligible bachelors, a playboy who seemed to have finally decided he'd found his perfect mate. The woman was the only one ever introduced to his low key and conservative family, who accepted her wholeheartedly as a future daughter-in-law.

Days the huge diamond engagement ring was given, the guy and his lady love set the wedding within the next six months. But one day, the gentleman, who apparently still had the roving eye, told his fiancee: "You must understand—I am [his surname]; and I might still fool around, but you are my wife and will always be No. 1."

Shocked, the gorgeous lady immediately broke off the engagement. A week later, she got a long letter from her ex-fiance expressing regret—and asking for the ring back. A civilized lady, she did return the ring... but kept the blue-white diamond stone. Or let us! The guy left speechless, has never remarried to this day.

Next, we have another eye-catching lady...a teenager at that...who dotes many male wolves fantasize. One very married gentleman fell for our young Lolita and spoiled her no end on endless shopping and travel. For her birthday gift, he gives her a lab house in an upscale address.

However, while the aging wolf wasn't around, Little Red Riding Hood had other

UNSEALING C/

How to decode love

CAN THERE REALLY BE A "100% love story?"

Helen Fisher, author of "Decoding Love: Why it Takes Twelve Drugs to Find a Mouse and Other Revelations from the Science of Attraction" believes that yes, there can be one, but like all other things in life, it takes a whole lot of blood, sweat and tears.

Those stories engaging and serious all the issues from attraction to dating, to that "spark" between the exes and the arduous road to ever after—fuels how certain perfume scents can make you seem divorced, to the mathematical theory that determines the average number of people you must date before finding Mr. or Mrs. Right, to how brain plays a role in catalyst for attraction, to the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" that can help determine whether your marriage will sink or swim to the complete of sense.

It's school. I'd recommend to anyone between ages 18 and 58 because whether you are still in the dating game, or are newly-single, or have just finished your 30th wedding anniversary there's a lot that can be learned from this insightful and intelligent book.

Of particular interest to me and perhaps to a lot of my friends and readers is middle are the chapters on what Tiere has learned about marriage. He draws heavily from the work of Emeritus at the renowned psychologist at the University of Washington who runs the famous institute which has for years save lives affectionately called "The Love Lab."

Gottman has been studying couples since the 1970s, trying to understand why they succeed and fail. His method of analysis has been perhaps the most rigorous attempt to decode marital interactions ever invented. Gottman videotapes a couple while they discuss something about which they disagree. That's nothing extraordinary.

What sets him apart is his method of analysis—an elaborate scoring system that scores virtually every emotion a couple might express.

"Each fleeting emotional tic is scored so that a five seconds' exchange will result in several hundred for each person...the couples are hooked up to heart monitors as well as other biofeedback equipment to measure people's stress levels during conversation."

There's book says that Gottman estimates it takes an average of 15 hours to analyze a single hour of videotape.

And what Gottman found has been quite revealing.

There says that Gottman outlines three patterns that can help reveal whether or not newlyweds will get divorced, based on watching the couple for three minutes.

The first crucial element is how the discussion starts. Whether are of, on the onset to begin the conversation, a gentle tone can derail hearing "We need to talk"—and so they establish the tone of the exchange.

The critical question in Does the woman begin with a soft or harsh opening? How she does it, Gottman says, determines much of what follows.

Second, does the woman complain about something specific ("I wish you would spend less time watching television") or something global and character related ("You're obsessive-compulsive—can you just leave the stuff as it is?"). "If a couple can master the soft opening and the specific complain, they will go a long way toward a happy marriage," Tiere says.

I know what you're thinking because that was my thought bubble, too. So it's all dependent on the woman, then?! Tiere says "The partners' reaction to all of this is also crucial. It is open to his wife's criticism? Yes, it's rare—listening to your wife is incredibly important for a happy marriage."

His adds that if the husband's response amplifies over time and he tends to get defensive, the couple also has a higher chance of heading for the divorce courts.

Four Horsemen

In Tiere' book, Gottman outlines the four key emotions couples must look out for which he calls "The four horsemen of the Apocalypse."

"The first is criticism. Constructive criticism about a specific behavior is fine, but criticism that attacks someone's character are not. The other three **recession** to vanish out for are duties, reversal, contempt and stonewalling."

Though majority of marriedallies are over, there are many women who like to stonewall, too. Gottman says the behavior is destructive in the sense that it totally builds emotional distance which can be very damaging. And the one final relationship killer is the Four Horsemen mix: repairing. "During and after fights, happy and unhappy couples make attempts to repair the damage. The problem with unhappy couples is that the repair usually comes with a sting (you, thing) attached. If couples regularly unleash the Four Horsemen on one another and are failures at repairing, that is a great predictor of divorce."

Tiere says what's hugely essential, ends by saying that it is not his book's desire to knock the romantic ones line off its pedestal because "...the happiest lives are those that approach life not as a tragedy or as a farce but as a romance...and each of us can name individuals in our circle of love that really did conquer all."

Like Tiere, I subscribe to the belief that the heart is ever resilient, that love, for as long as we remain open, is a possibility at any stage in life. What doesn't have to be is once in your lifetime love can make all your round.

"Decoding Love" by Andrew Tiere is available at National Bookstore.

E-mail the author at carly.fabros@gmail.com.

ROOTS AND WINGS

Carly Fabros-Gabalfo

Three patterns that help reveal whether or not newlyweds are headed for divorce or separation

Should she fire her efficient caretaker due to jealousy?

DEAR EMILY,

I am a middle-aged "old maid," a fit and ugly individual, who enrolls a caretaker in 24/7. The main issue is my internal jealousy toward her because she is pretty, young and sexy. Whenever I go, all my male friends ecstatic her more than me because she's tall, fair, slimmed, has a sexy butt and is very sweet. She excudes a very natural bounce in her because she is really efficient and silent in her work. How do I deal with this internal jealousy? It's so hard to find a replacement as efficient as her.

Helpless

EMILY'S POST

Emily A. Marcelo

Oftentimes, things are not what they seem. Clearly you've obsessed with your unfitness, so can you being just a bit paranoid here? As you contact walk and you're fat. "Ugly" is too cruel a word to use for someone who is obese. "Ugly" to you may look divine to another. Sure, your male friends probably notice her, but are you seeing they contact take their eyes off her during their actual conversation with you? Does this caregiver join in your discussions? If so, does she do it with aplomb and consideration toward others—like you? Or does she just stay in a corner and keep quiet like a quiet appointing its work? Sex might be reading too much or what could really only be a bleak wall here. Men will always appreciate beauty and kindness in women. Who wouldn't? Beautiful women are those whom attracted to cause the women.

If it will help any, make her wait outside when you're with guests, and tell her with a bazaar when you need her. Not everything has to be a battle. Like it or not, there is a solution to every problem. Just smash your imagination a bit.

Being cooped up in your house is 24/7 make this unwise, or is not at all healthy for the rest of you. Yes, she may need the salary you give her. But she might realize sooner than later she can get the same amount somewhere else, considering how efficient you say she is—and with less tension—which will definitely be a blow to you. Getting good help is almost like losing an arm and a leg.

What you have to do is rein in your paranoia. Do you find yourself walking and replaying the day's events in your mind, ad nauseaum? Why not resolve to get out of your safe cocoon and explore the world? Do you have hobbies? Enjoy writing? Start a journal. Travel, if you can afford it. Or visit places where people are worse off than you are (you'd like the orphanage, home for the aged, half-way houses for drug addicts or centers for battered women. If only to show you "There will be greater or lesser persons than yourself," to pinch a few from "Desiderata."

Let not your physical afflictions deter you from living life to the fullest. But should it retard the growth of your mind. There are no limits to what positive thoughts can do to the well being of the body—nothing—and being an invalid should not mean imprisonment.

(emilyamarcelo@inquirer.com.ph—SUN LIFESTYLES)

Unsealing my lips . . .

From page G1

widow, vying for her affection. When married men hired out his Lolos wasn't faithful, he called it quits. But can babies our wives come get bad managed to bag the title to the house, another winner in the round of love?

How about this super attractive married woman from an old-wealth family, happily married to an equally wealthy, well-respected gentleman? Happily? We all thought so at the time.

Then a dashing gentleman came along, belonging to the same elite secluded circle, and married, too. Friends began noticing that the two were getting closer and closer to each other. In the end, the attractive woman left her husband and continued her dangerous liaison with her lover, who was still with his wife. There, in an interesting twist, the gentleman and his wife patched up their feuding marriage. Our hopeful other woman was left with no husband and no lover, dealt a devastating loving card.

Looking for clues

How does one know whether a spouse or lover is having a dangerous liaison? Some hints:

First, the scent: It's the biggest giveaway. When you smell a perfume or cologne scent on your lover or husband's shirt, especially on the collar or below the shoulders, that's not your scent, get ready for war!

Second, the excuse: "I have a seminar out of town." But then you find out he was seen with a companion in a resort somewhere in Tagaytay. When do you do? Confront him immediately. Of course, he'll deny it 'til he's blue in the face, but it's up to you to keep up the battle, or accept the excuse.

A true case: A friend of mine thought her marriage was in strong as the Rock of Gibraltar, until one day she found out her spouse, on days when he was supposedly out of town, was merely philandering. She asked to be brought strawberries from Baguio where her husband said he was going. Then a close pal told her he bought the strawberries from a supermarket in Manila! Needless to say, the marriage went kaput.

Third hint: When your lover gets extra romantic with you—calling you more than usual, say or giving you little gifts or flowers. It's called a guilty conscience, and he's trying to make amends.

Last juicy tale: Around 6 a.m. Valentine's Day, the phone in the couple's bedroom rings. The wife heard a text protocol on the answer. She found her husband say: "Yes, honey, its okay. Don't worry I'll be there. Yes, I love you, too." Incensed, the woman—my friend—grabbed a pillow and beat her husband on the head several times, screaming: "Have dare you talk to your querida (mistress) in our room, with me beside you, on valentine's Day at that!"

When the poor husband got to speak, he said: "That was our daughter who wanted to be picked up from her grandfather's house!"

My girl pal felt like a damn fool and spent the whole day apologizing to her hubby. Moral of the story: Innocent until proven guilty!

Frigid Farrab, Wild Wendy or Mature Martha—finally, the perfect woman

By Lito Gutierrez
Contributor

With Roxxxy, you won't need a pre-nup; a lifetime supply of batteries, maybe

HEADS UP, ALL YOU LOSERS out there! You no longer have to spend Valentine's Day all by your miserable self.

Say hi to Roxxxy, a 5-ft-7 replica of a woman who feels like a woman, talks some of the annoying habits, like telling us you, for example, again—your second dateless on the bedroom floor, or reminding you that it's Valentine's Day—again.

She's going to set you back about $7,000. But can you really put a price on a girlfriend who won't drag you to her shopping expeditions or go through your browsing history or your text messages?

Convincing argument

But the most convincing argument that she's a keeper is her sense of perfection. She has nice, like her body of a basketball, her smooth skin, the texture of soft, human skin. A bit rubbery, to be sure, but considering that your last sexual contact with a human being was shortly after enamel has was declared, you surely wouldn't appreciate the difference.

Her eyes seem a bit glazed sometimes, but, hey, by that time you ought to have gotten used to such minor, like the withering glare the saucer throws at you every time she catches you drooling while looking through the Victoria's Secret catalogue.

Here's more: You don't have to worry about being what's left of your self-esteem, because Roxxxy does not care if you satisfy in bed. You don't need to shave, tweak your torch, or put on your cologne when you feel like making out. You don't have to get up at 3 a.m. to go to the bathroom to be greeted the unremitting silence to your gut ruined by eating too much carrots for nutrients.

In other words, finally, a woman who will take you, literally and

Tech whiz

And before you dismiss Roxxxy as a sicko, the robot you fake can be a tech whiz, "an artificial intelligence engineer," who used to work for the telecom R&D juggernaut Bell Labs before starting up TrueCompanion, the company that makes Roxxxy.

Roxxxy made her recent debut at the AVN (Adult Video News) Adult Entertainment Expo at—where else—Las Vegas. By strange coincidence, besides the expo was the Consumer Electronics Show. Why Hmm chose the adult entertainment crowds to unveil his creation was a bit of a surprise. Given the mass and volume of sexual dysfunction on this planet, Roxxxy has to be the biggest economic innovation for men since bath drain stoppers.

But because Roxxxy can't cook, do the dishes or give oral sex, she may not yet qualify to ride shotgun in your car to let you get on the carpool lane. But, according to a wire report, she has an articulated skeleton that allows her to sense like a person.

While "a full C-cup" and "a sensitivity that grows in a rigid cooling system," Hmm says she "is ready for action." In bed, she could thus be a firecracker or a corpse, or the spouse next door, as could be gleaned from the "pre-programmed personalities" of the three introductory models—Frigid Farrah, Wild Wendy and Mature Martha.

We can only speculate about the scientific basis for these choices "personalities." Indeed they may sound foolish, but a sneak peek into the adult section of your friendly neighborhood video store would validate the need for a product like Roxxxy.

It is if you'd see a microcosm of the multi-billion dollar market for a plethora of sexual entertainment preferences.

Caveat

Hmm offers a caveat, though, maybe to avoid being sued for false advertising. Roxxxy can't walk—which shouldn't be a problem. She can't run away if she finds you sexist. She can't also move her limbs, which surely would be a bit of disappointment to folks hoping for at least a semblance of physical reciprocity.

Still, there is hope. Hmm says it took him a score to develop Roxxxy. Before her, he had "freaky who—which?—he said, with "not user-friendly." That only means succeeding generations of robot sex partners would become increasingly more sensitive.

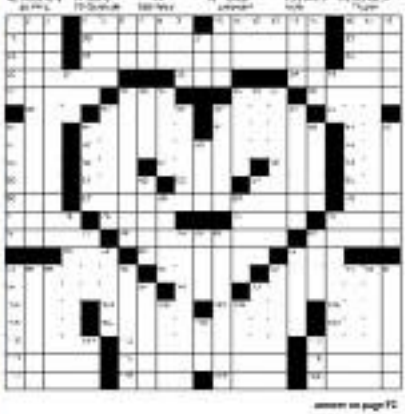
Until then, Roxxxy would certainly be a nice gift for a lonely soul whose diamond of finding a genuine soul mate are as good as me getting into a ménage a trois with Nicole Kidman and Penélope Cruz.

The upside is, with Roxxxy you won't need a pre-nup. A lifetime supply of batteries, maybe. And a PayPal account for easier purchasing of the latest "personality" software.

Sunday Crossword

PREMIER CROSSWORD By Frank A. Longo

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY



answers on page F2

Express love in digital style

PINOYSLEUTH audio language courses and, below, Joyeye Lito

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Melo's Steakhouse complements its menu offerings of Niagara and Angus steaks, appetizers, salads, pastas, seafood dishes and desserts with friendly and personal service. And passion by acclaimed Filipino chef Sau Sandoval still fires it up.

The lighting is subdued, soothing music is played, and waiters greet patrons on a first-name basis, making the overall dining experience pleasurable. Melo's Steakhouse is at 7/F Jupiter St., Bel-Air Village, Makati City. Dial 6388-8486 or 09 Jupiter St., Quezon City, 6340164, 41 Prescott, Mezzanine, Alabang, Muntinlupa City, 771-0388, and Burgos Circle, The Fort, Taguig, 8536865.

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Make this Valentine special at Cibo and enjoy Marijet Sa Fiesta' Polpettone di Manzo—beef meatballs, pasta fish, parmesan and Italian parsley, with a choice of salad, panna or pomodoro sauce. Cibo is at Glorietta 5, Ayala Triangle Gardens, Paseo de Roxas, Makati City. Dial 750-0483 or 750-0484.

Westgate

Westgate Center in Filinvest Alabang, Muntinlupa, has the finest roster of restaurants, offering Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Chinese, French, American, "Splatino" and Filipino food. Congo Grille gives away a food-at-edition Valentine's Congo Glass for every order of special set menus for 2, 4 or 6 pax. Resident's Burger offers sweet for two for only P385, while Andrada Restaurant & Wine Bar offers a five-course meal for couples. Starbird's Mediterranean Bistro offers Valentine's Day lunch buffet and dinner with live music.

Makati Shangri-La

Makati Shangri-La's Imagine at Nic's Chinese New Year's Day Lunch Buffet. Circles Event Café offers Chinese New Year Brunch Buffet. Guests who avail of this special Valentine's set menu will be entitled to join the lucky draw for a chance to win a three-day, two-night weekend stay in Pudong Shangri-La, Shanghai, which includes round-trip air tickets from Cebu Pacific. Call 813 8888 loc. 1588, 7388.

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V-Day aphrodisiac dishes

CABALLO CIPRIOS VALENTINO "aphrodisiac" dishes such as Bakol a la Pobre, Beef Papaitan, Balbas and Binagoongan as part of the buffet spread, which includes all-you-can-eat Sizzling Strip, Kare-Kare, Beringhe, Inihaw na Hito with Buong Sapsa, Pakaw na Lechon and Kalderetang Baka.

After a good filling meal, have Tibok Tibok and Leche Flan or cool down with Ando-ho-hos the bar of homemade halo-halo ingredients.

As a romantic treat the Valentines weekend, free heart-shaped chocolates are given for every order of the Caballo love dishes.

For reservations and all kinds of functions, visit Caballo restaurants at 67 West Ave., QC; 3/L Bridgetowne 100 Megastar, G/L Robinsons Place, Manila; G/L Robinsons Starmills, San Fernando, Pampanga; G/L Sta. Lucia East Grand Mall, U/L SM City Clark; L/L Club Ave. Festival Mall, Alabang; L/L Paseo de Sto. Rosa, Laguna; and for takeby opened Caballo at SM Cebu, Cebu.

Visit the following branches for a sweet buffet adduction, which includes last sixty good old Pampanga favorites but also Asian specialties. 2/L "B'Mona

TIBOK-TIBOK (left) and Beef Papaitan

Mall; G/L Glorietta 2; G/L Robinsons Mall, SM Mall of Asia, for more details, call 5723333 or 8979888. For more big treats, call 911-5522.

Globe Asiatique redefines mass housing in the Philippines

For Delfin Lee, the company is his contribution to society

By Ravenna C. Burgos

IT WAS IN 1994 THAT SUCCESSFUL entrepreneur and philanthropist Delfin Lee started a company that would develop attractive yet affordable houses for low-income earners.

"We are in the business of building communities and not just houses. The ordinary Filipino wants a better lifestyle; a higher standard of living for his/her children than what they actually had while growing up. We at Globe Asiatique are going all out in order to make this portion Pinoy dream possible, and I believe we've been uniquely successful," said Lee, president of Globe Asiatique Realty Holdings Corporation (GA), in Beyond episode of "The GA Report".

The 13-episode show (YGA, ongoing until April 24, is shown on ABS-CBN every Thursday, 10:30-11 p.m., with replays every Saturday, 1-1:30 p.m. It's also telecast on The Filipino Channel, reaching audiences here and abroad. The program is hosted by Lee and Angelin Lopez Jr., broadcaster, television personality and Clark Development Corporation public affairs manager.

"The GA Report" provides viewers with fresh concepts on housing and property development. The program tackles city planning, corporate social responsibility, career in the field of sales, etc. It also has hands-on tours and success stories. Tips on customer-care programs and tips will also be given by Lee.

Contributing to society

For Lee, putting up GA meant more than entering a new market. It was an opportunity to contribute to society.

"Growing up, we didn't have much but being involved in a good environment, showed me that it plays an important part in molding a person," he said. "I realized we could do more than just provide decent housing. We could actually create communities that inspire and cultivate productivity and make people proud to live in them."

According to Lee, he literally grew up in business, seeing his aunts and uncles operate the family lumberyard as a child. There, he would discuss business ideas with the other workers and owners of neighboring shops in Binondo.

As he grew older, his business sense developed and began making in a range of goods. After engaging in real estate in the 1980s, Lee brought his children Charles and Chloe into the business.

Flagship projects

Lee's vision for GA is born because of its two flagship projects in Pampanga — Provia Bacolor and Riviera Malabanan, which were launched in 2007 and 2008. These two have just propelled for a complete package of residential, commercial and public establishments in a pedestrian-based community.

But for Lee, it's not enough to build recreational facilities in a beach ambience. "People who belong to this working class also need facilities for them. Besides we are also built everything they need such as offices, hospital/terminal, and even a school within walking distance," he explained. The school was built in partnership with the k-media program of ABS-CBN Foundation. "For the Filipino breadwinner, the education of his kids is an important factor. So once he has his dream house, education is his next priority. We are happy to say that in Riviera Bacolor, the children of our buyers get access to free education, complete with free books and uniforms."

DEXTER Lee

Xavera Malabanan is equally at par with the quality of such Xavera brand. It also features a school, church, town hall, wet and dry market, clubhouse with an Olympic-size swimming pool, commercial areas, procurement park, three towers on park and transportation terminal.

GA's other projects include The Courtyard, Rose Dos, Rose Homes in Laguna, Serenevilla in Angeles City, Xavera Neo-Cologne in Mindoro, Saint Monique Hotels in Rizal, Diokno Watercastle in Valenzuela City, Casa Bianca in Bulacan, Golden City Business Park in Bulacan, The Enclave in Pampanga and Bel-Step Suites in Quezon City.

"They are all top-class developments

PHOTO goes of Xavera Bacolor

DELFIN Lee

made affordable for the average Filipino. Also, these projects gain market acceptability because they have received financing from Pag-IBIG. Our focus is the mid-level. We strive to elevate lifestyle conditions through our housing projects and make it affordable to income-challenged Filipinos," Lee explains.

Secrets of success

"The phenomenal success of GA in redefining mass housing in the Philippines can be attributed to its innovative financing schemes as well as its unique market segmentation to reach out to the low-income segment.

GA has partnerships with ABS-CBN reality show "Pinoy Dream Builder" and Wilfie Ferdinand's "Homeowner." The Wilfie house was actually modeled after Lito Monique Hotels' home and helped catapult GA to nationwide recognition.

In "Homeowners' Bigtime Pinoy Bayong game, the most coveted prize is a GA house and lot. The company also supported shows like "Pinoy Dream Academy" and "Little Big Star."

On the marketing front, Lee is assisted by his daughter Chloe. GA's vice president for international sales and marketing. She pointed out that the company's success is based on keeping in touch with reality. "I remember asking my father how can judge quality when we build a house. He said, if we can live in it, then we can sell it to the buyer. If you cannot see yourself living in such a house, then there is no marketing it."

While the unique GA approach as service-focused and customer-centric, it is no surprise that the company has accomplished much in a short time.

"When people move into our houses, suddenly, the way they carry themselves is different. You see the their faces. Their smiles, that they're proud to belong," Lee said.

Giving back to the community is embedded in the company's business model, and encourages all employees to participate in all of its corporate social responsibility endeavors. In typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng and the first Luzon visit with the spirit of service at heart.

"It's just another marketing scheme, where. To be honest, if other companies started doing what we do, I would be very happy because there would have been no need for us to be here. We're not in this business to make money. We're in this business to help people," Lee said.

"Globe Asiatique is a young company. We have a lot to learn. We have a lot to improve on. We have so much room to grow. And we're very excited to be a part of this journey," he added.

DIVINE Lee

Editor Ermie G. Velarde

ENTERTAINMENT

INSIDE
■ Jo Ampil home to 'Try Love' InHollywood /H6

Mark Gil's 4th kid in the biz

By Marinel R. Cruz

ANDI EIGENMANN, DAUGHTER OF MULTI-awarded actors Hiedi Gil and Jaclyn Jose, said she did not want to cast her real surname as an onscreen moniker or title.

"I wanted to be known on my own merits. I didn't want people to like me just because I'm an Eigenmann," said the lead star of the new telemovie, "Agua Bendita" on Channel 2.

Andi, Andrew Eigenmann to real life, is Hiedi's fourth offspring to join show biz. Hiedi's children with actress Bing Pimentel—Gabby, Maxine and Thursday (who goes by the screen name Sid Lucero)—have all appeared in TV shows or movies in the past few years.

"Agua Bendita" is about twin sisters Beah (Agua), who is normal, and Agua, who has a physical defect. Andi portrays both characters. Agua struggles with her unexplainable physical condition while Beah still grows up to become about her twin.

Anita Linda makes ... a music video

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HER SIX-decade career, Anita Linda sings—kills a music video! DJ Alyssa's "Walking Away"—current single for his album, "Stormwork."

When the video was offered to Anita by Mylo's manager Nina Femia, she got very excited: "I bugged Alexa [Miro] to say groundbreaking teenage friends."

Just imagine, she said, she'll be seen on music channels like MTV, Myx and Channel [V]. "First thing I asked was, would I have to sing and dance?"

The shoot, under director Cathy Sal-vador, went smoothly. "We shot it in an old mansion in Antipolo—at dusk," Ate Anita said. The view from the hill was beautiful."

Some made sure Anita was treated like a queen. And GL Mpke was honored to work with "Hermano Mio," the actress' real name. "She's very artistic," Mpke said. "She was beyond what is asked of her."

In the music video, Anita plays a mysterious woman waiting for her love. The video will be released sometime after tonight.

After the ABS-CBN soap "Sayang Dalawa" and Brillante Mendoza's Cannes-winning film "Lola," Anita does two indie movies back-to-back: Tony del Mundo's "Pagdiwal ng Anghel" and Adolfo Alix Jr.'s "Presa."

In "Anghel," she plays a beggar; in "Presa," a taxi driver scheme pulled by drug pushers.

She said she enjoyed shooting "Anghel" at the Edsa Shrine—a very busy intersection. "Ate production thought I was a real beggar and gave me P5."

In "Presa," she shares the screen with a powerhouse cast: Rosanna Roces, Dexter Doria, Jericho Rosales, Judy Ann Santos and Perla Bautista.

"The efforts and talents of the Shower's Conventional were nice and accommodating," Anita said.

For the prizes film, she dyed her hair—already silver but black. "I looked terrible. I'll never dye my hair again."

Mark Gil's 4th kid in the biz

From page C9

Your older sister Marlene is also an ABS-CBN talent. How does she feel about you getting a lead role before she did?

We honestly don't talk about work when we're together. My sister and I are very close. I don't get to see her often because we're both busy but I'm quite sure she's happy that I finally got my big break.

You're the daughter of two great actors. How do you handle this?

Napakahirap to me. My parents said that because I have their genes, people expect me to be a good actress, too. But I try not to think much about this. My goal is to make people appreciate me for who I am.

Shaina Magdayao first played "Ignas Bonifilio" in 2007. How different will your show be from hers?

I decided not to watch Shaina's version, haha kasi magsasabay-sabay. I want to give viewers a fresh take on these characters.

Being part of a telenovela is not easy. Have you adjusted to the long working hours?

I work on the show every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday. I log about 16 hours a day. The production team doesn't always get to edit so they schedule because it's just our pilot week and we're working very hard para mapaganda iyan ang show.

Show business is very intense. Do you think you're ready for it?

Yes, I am ... Im ready to face intrigues, but I don't intend to do anything that will put me or my family in a bad light.

What advice have your parents been giving you?

Both of them have said professionalism is very important ... They also said I shouldn't consider friends. My mom always tells me to take care of myself. I think to the parenting magazines ... My dad always tells me to be grateful to the industry, which has treated our family well.

Ignas Bonifilio also stars Mutya Orquia as Renata, Jason Abalos as Rico, Wes Gonzalez as the twins' mother Mercedes and John Arcilla as the father, Dr Marcelo Ocampo. It airs weeknights on the Primetime Bida time slot.

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CUCK!

BC Concepcion and Richard Gutierrez

Movie fest

MOTHER AND daughter Dianne Concio and BC Concepcion star in Filipino films festival's back-to-back offering today on ETC/A2Z.

Richard Gutierrez joins Dianne for the latter part of marital separation and custody issues the real value of reconciliation in "Walang Kapalit" at 10:30 a.m.

At 12 p.m., Richard Gutierrez helps BC Concepcion discover true love in the romantic comedy "When I Met You" at 12 n.n.

Kiddie show

"Q'dna & Co," the newest program on Q Channel 11, encourages kids to embrace their heritage and appreciate Filipino culture through games and bonding activities.

The show, which features child entertainers who sing, dance and recite, airs Saturdays at 7 a.m. on Q Channel 11.

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After London, Jo Ampil is home to 'Try Love'

▶ See page H8

Cameron Mackintosh was the one who introduced me to her. He said, 'Sharon performed in 'Les Miserables' in Dublin.' So when the Queen replied, 'Is that right?' in her proper English accent, And I think I fainted and said, 'Yes, Ma'am!' instead of "Yes, Your Highness."

What were you looking forward to about coming home?

I am very much looking forward to releasing my album. I made sure that I didn't book myself to do any shows in London just so I can concentrate on this. Secondly, the food...

Tell us about the album with Sony Music Philippines.

It is a collaboration of comedy ballads from the past. Songs I used to listen to when I was growing up in Manila. Some of them classics by me and others by people who know my voice pretty well. It is a revival of pop songs mostly from the '70s and '80s. But we went stripped-everything. Mr. Rhinemanez of Sony Music really did a great job of finding out which songs would work for me. These include 'Eternity,' 'If I Believed,' 'Lately,' the Blondie Wonder hit, some Carpenters songs, etc, and one Tagalog piece by Shugborg Arevalo. Celso Bonilla, my manager, insisted that I include one Tagalog song. 'Magkaiba ng Ito.' That is very special to me because in London, every time they ask me to sing a Tagalog song, that's the one I sing. I also have "Try Love," the title track, a piece by Jude Gold, who composed 'Frozen A Glimmer.'

I have to thank Ariel Rivera, too, for agreeing to do a duet of 'The Last time I felt Like This' with me. He's a fabulous crooner.

Which of these songs resonate with you the most and why?

As a person, "Healing" has a message that touches me. It's almost spiritual and inspiring.

How is this album special?

I've never done an album in my hometown. And it's my first comedy pop album. I've only done musical ones and the styles are totally different. I am very happy with it and working with the team, especially Emille Marquez (musical supervisor), was wow-ed over. He was just so thorough in 1 way. I love that. When you do a record, you try to eliminate so many mistakes as you can. It'll be there forever.

You've played some of musical theater's most interesting women. Which ones did you identify with the most and the least?

Identify with the most would be pretty hard as I would like to believe that at that point in time, I was the part I was playing. I think I feel the least with Mary Magdalene. It was my second show in the West End and I had just turned 21. Playing a sexualized prostitute at that age was pretty harrowing.

Aside from performing for the Queen, what are your 10 most unforgettable moments as a performer?

1) Working with Nick Hytner in 'Miss Saigon.'

2) Seeing people in the audience, particularly the ones in the line 40s, stand up after a performance of "Les Mis" with tears in his eyes.

3) When Andrew Lloyd Webber drank my hand and knew my name on one of the gatherings we had after a performance of 'Joseph' (Solo Supervisor).

4) Performing as Elsa Dorlonia, with Jonathan Pryce as Higgins when we did a tribute to "My Fair Lady" after "Miss Saigon" became the "longest-running musical and beat "My Fair Lady's" record.

5) Closing my solo of "Miss Saigon" because that same night, I got the news that I was to play Fantine in "Les Mis."

6) Sydney premiere of "Miss Saigon" with my family being there.

7) Being next to Judi Bench when she decided to join us on stage in "Les Mis."

8) When we toured "Les Mis" to a new theater (Queens) and working with the original team.

9) Performing in front of a Filipino audience when I played the role of Maria in "West Side Story."

10) Going on Christmas Eater's lap when he played Santa during our "Xmas Jungle."

Email the columnist at evmpadro_9000@yahoo.com

By Pachalo Concepcion

THE MANILA CONCERT OF the band Chicago, originally set Sept. 14, has postponed when key member Robert Lamm suffered a leg injury to finally pushing through on Sunday at the Big Dome.

"Surprisingly, people who bought tickets for the original date did not ask for a refund," said Jesse de Guia, veteran Dominic Pendatun is mounting the show. The old tickets will be honored on Tuesday.

Way down Chicago—long past its prime since peaking in the 1970s—continue to attract an audience here! It may be wrong to label it as an "oldies" band, having released new records in 2006's "Chicago XXXI" and 2008's "House of Storyland"), but it may not be right, either, to consider the group relevant to young music fans.

One factor for Chicago's continued popularity here is that the "classic rock" audience demographic is expanding. This means the college kids of the '80s, who absorbed their older siblings' appreciation of "Hotwater, now have steady jobs and can afford to buy nostalgic albums (and maybe the band's greatest hits CDs after the gig).

Add to that the band's many fan base, the baby boomers (born after World War II), and a pretty good acoustic synergies—we realize the cases that turn up every new groups like Aerosmith, the Beach Boys and their "band-music" (which Mind, to be their regular tour songs.

Another probable reason for fans' interest to watch Chicago live is that some of those who watched Dave Carson, the band's former lead vocalist/bassist, last year also at the Big Dome seemed a bit disappointed not to hear much of the group's classic songs.

In any case, the current Chicago band lineup still has the original horn section composed of James Pankow (trombone), Lee Loughnane (trumpet) and Walter Parazaider (saxophone), as well as Lamm (who sang lead vocals on "Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?," "Beginnings," "Saturday In the Park").

Jason Scheff, who took Cetera's place, does not impress some critics who've seen him in concert on "Soul Mike, but we'll see how he fares this time.

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Seemingly ordinary events leave a big impact by making a difference in people's lives. The simple occasion of having a phone connection installed – and installed in an instant – is one of them.

On a sunny Saturday last February 6, residents of Sampaloc in Manila, Lapu-Lapu City and Mandaue City in Cebu were delighted to have their landlines installed within 24 hours from the time of application–a cause for joy knowing they were connected to family, friends and the whole world.

Countless people lined up as soon as PLDT Bilis Kabit booths were set-up. Many of them were already satisfied PLDT customers who were there to sign up for additional services such as PLDT myDSL and PLDT Call All. Even first time subscribers were impressed. Getting the best that PLDT can offer at an affordable price within 24 hours was indeed a fulfilling experience.

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After London, Jo Ampil is home to 'Try Love'

LOS ANGELES—WHEN WE WATCHED Jonalyn Viray Ampil as Christian Eve in "Avenue Q" at the Gielgud Theatre in London last year, it was our first time to see her perform.

She totally captivated the crowd, including us, in her portrayal of the funny scene-stealing character—a Japan-born therapist in Brooklyn with equally scene-stealing costumes. She sang duets well, too, in the Tony Award-winning musical with puppets operated by actors onstage. Since Jo premiered in Christian Eve's heavily applauded signature song "The More You Are Someone" that night, we "met" her in that day. She also performed the Gielgud crowd with her delivery of "It Sucks To Be Me."

After a curtain call punctuated by vigorous shouts from the audience and after she hung her costume (it lights up literally like a Christmas tree), Jo visited my wife Anne and me up her dressing room to chat over pizza and cookies. And she crossed admiration for her feelgo sources like West End theatre. It shared what she missed about the Philippines: "I miss the night life. I miss not being homesick because it is so much fun over there. And it gets really lonely here sometimes."

Impressive credits

Only 16 when she left the Philippines to join "Miss Saigon" in London, Jo has since racked up impressive stage credits in Europe and Australia. As soon as to play some of musical theatre's most notable characters: Mary Magdalene ("Jesus Christ Superstar"), Princess Jasmine ("Aladdin"), Ilgenine and Fantine ("Les Miserables"), Sheila Franklin ("Hair") and Mimi ("Rent"), among others. She sang as Nettie in a special performance of "Let Me" before Queen Elizabeth II, other members of the royal family, Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac, who were then British Prime Minister and French President, respectively, and other VIPs at the Windsor Castle.

After recently singing "The More You Are Someone" one last time, Jo flew back to Manila to release her first "homecoming" album, "Try Love," on Monday, Feb. 15. She also has an eponymously titled solo album of musical theater staples and is featured in various star and special recordings, Int. Some were all made abroad. "Try Love" is a collection of familiar pop songs recast with appealing, stylish audience. Finds the way Jo excitedly described the tracks, we think many people will discover and "test" her when they listen to "Try Love."

Below are excerpts from our London chat and a review a small interview with her:

How was your first night at Christmas Eve?

It was a lot of fun, a little emotional but more on the fun side. I still nearly cum. But role as I found it quite unique to many ways.

What will you miss about Christmas Eve?

I was in the show for 10 months so I will of course miss the people I worked with. There were only 13 of us, which is a pretty small cast. You have to choose how to get along with people. With this cast, it happened naturally.

I will miss the laughter from the audience. I felt like a proper comedienne as Christmas Eve; I never thought I could do "Nanny."

Are you already missing that Christmas Eve-inspired costume with flashing lights? Any stage mishaps with that costume?

I was just about to say that I'm missing that dress, too. That is the best costume I've ever worn in my history of musical theater. I always imagined tripping over the dress and falling off stage. Thank God that never happened...the latter. I mean, because the tripping over the dress happened several times. I guess it just added to the comedy.

What were your memorable experiences in the show?

It would have to be the opening night where I experienced having an audience who actually laughed at the lines I delivered. It was exhilarating. Also, the closing night at the Noel Coward Theatre where the show opened initially, before the transfer to the Gielgud. We all felt like rock stars. The audience went extremely wild.

How did you keep your performances fresh every night?

We find inspiration every day and you make sure you give your 100 percent. You don't dunk off. It is a skill that you develop to remind the stars. And since we did it eight times a week, you learn to keep it fresh.

Who are some of the celebrities who watched/"became Q" during your run?

We had Emma Thomas, Gwi Hallbrell, some local celebs from London. Brian May from Queen, and Sarah more I can't remember.

Can you tell us about your experience performing for the Queen?

That was the highlight of my career—to be able to perform for the royal family and other dignitaries. She was so charming. Performing for the Queen for the first time made me so nervous. And since I was the first person to do a solo number for her, I was scared.

How was your first meeting with her?

We shared a little bit. I remember she had lipstick smudge on her teeth so that made me feel less intimidated. I felt she was human, too.

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Rebecca V. Nagsalay

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ENTERTAINMENT

Behold, a new hunk in the harem

THERE'S A NEW KID on the block—actually in influential Gay Ilaw's harem.

Bruno Gil just waited for SB to grow up and fill out. SB used to look man and gaugky, but he has since mustered up courage and SB's standards for muscle-bound studs. Dazed on his cute, sporty if stylish demeanor to the past.

Don't be surprised if SB's show his stuck skyrockets overnight, and soon.

Incidentally, SB used to be linked to Penny Bartlet, now reported to be the girlfriend of Jerry Arcia, who's also in SB's harem.

What a confusing Valentine's Day it will be for them!

Bizarre triangle

And this one's a real-life Valentine Glamorous Beauty already got knocked up by Hayley Arceo.

At a result, SB had to part ways with Long-Time Sweetie, who purportedly had romantic designs on him. A love triangle gone sour? She better LOSE to suspect hers, for posting flooding the rumor to spite the former soul. Well kalk on her.

SHAMA: Sorry, Lloydie!

Rushes Sunday

Reality bites

Reality Discovery enrollee that he left his old studio because he couldn't stand the system, which involves a certain Powerful Exec's casting couch. BD refused the vicarious intercourse proposal, so his career never took off. Which is sad, because BD is talented and has industry awards to prove it.

TV5-ondu

Big stars like Dolphy, Manicol Soriano and Vic Sotto are now the only ones moving to TV5. Director Joel Javier hopes has signed up with the smuggling network to develop its comedy shows and plan workshops for its scriptwriters.

Well-liked Soap Opera Producer also left GMA 7 for TV5, colleagues told Bitches.

Meanwhile, loved staffers have left the top networks for the fledgling company as well. Top Writer I reportedly walked away after his station failed to reward him properly for a concept paper drafted for a new show.

Top Writer 2 left his own station for a similar reason. There's talk of him, or virtually non-existent, compensation for those that linger to development limbo for years.

The buzz on the Net is that some TV writers are thinking of forming a union to protect their interests. About time, said an industry veteran.

Sizing up the competition

Popular Star's Hunter got the score of his life when an old lover of PS', Cute Hunk, followed him to the men's room (to eardrum PEP!).

While PSP was doing his thing in there, CH engaged him in cheery conversation. Was CH sizing up the competition? Or is he just, uh, curious pala?

FOXNAME: Yes BFs online!

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3 VALENTINE'S DAY
4 THE WOLFMAN
5 PAANO NA KAYO
6 NATAW (Digital 3D)
7 LOVE HAPPENS
8 SWO
9 LESSON
10 PERCY JACKSON & OLYMPIANS: THE LIGHTNING THIEF

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1 THE WOLFMAN
2 PERCY JACKSON & OLYMPIANS: THE LIGHTNING THIEF
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4 THE WOLFMAN

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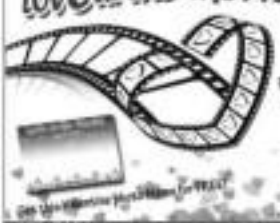
1 THE WOLFMAN
2 PERCY JACKSON & OLYMPIANS: THE LIGHTNING THIEF
3 VALENTINE'S DAY
4 DEAR JOHN

MOVIEWORLD
LOVE at the movies



A minimum single purchase of two movie tickets on February 13 and 14 entitles you to one FREE Valentine photo frame.

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2 THE WOLFMAN
3 PRINCESS AND THE FROG
4 THE BLIND SIDE
5 PAANO NA KAYO

DASMARINAS

1 PAANO NA KAYO
2 VALENTINE'S DAY
3 THE WOLFMAN
4 PERCY JACKSON & OLYMPIANS: THE LIGHTNING THIEF

STARMILLS

1 VALENTINE'S DAY
2 PAANO NA KAYO
3 AVATAR
4 THE PRINCESS & THE FROG
5 THE WOLFMAN
6 PERCY JACKSON & OLYMPIANS: THE LIGHTNING THIEF

IMUS

1 VALENTINE'S DAY
2 PERCY JACKSON & OLYMPIANS: THE LIGHTNING THIEF
3 THE WOLFMAN
4 PAANO NA KAYO

ANGELES

1 PERCY JACKSON & OLYMPIANS: THE LIGHTNING THIEF
2 PAANO NA KAYO
3 VALENTINE'S DAY
4 THE WOLFMAN

TACLOBAN

1 PERCY JACKSON & OLYMPIANS: THE LIGHTNING THIEF
2 THE SPY NEXT DOOR
3 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS: THE SQUAKUEL

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3 THE SPY NEXT DOOR

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2 VALENTINE'S DAY
3 PERCY JACKSON & OLYMPIANS: THE LIGHTNING THIEF
4 THE IMAGINATION OF DR. PARNASSUS
5 PAANO NA KAYO
6 LESSON

ILOILO

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2 PAANO NA KAYO
3 VALENTINE'S DAY
4 THE WOLFMAN
5 SOLOMON KANE
6 LESSON

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MOVIEWORLD

Behold, a new hunk in the harem

Turn to page 4

Ok, si Gil mo bird-watching? Creepy, PAP shouldn't eat.

Top of the tabloids

The top show for stories in Philippine Daily Inquirer tabloid flunkers this week. (And why we are moved, if we are moved.)

• Jennylyn Mercado pops paparazzi at nook in Patrick Garcia. (Tirrrooone!)

• Bea Alonzo unsure, maiden kay Zanek Cervantes. (Ano'ng sign nya...)

• Bong Revilla posts sang multo-photo kay Sen. Marcos. (Showing high school.)

• Polvoron, 2 pig drown in latrine. (Ang sayo-sayo nya!)

• John Lloyd Cruz, pinanong Jennylyn si Shaina Magdayao? (Di raw!)

• Shaina nag-sorry kay John Lloyd. (Ay, sino pa'ng nag-sorry?)

• Christian Bautista Inlaya na sa Iloilo. (Ok, got it then!)

• Gina Incencio, nag-inarte na naman! (And this is new!)

• Marvin Herrera: Aaron da pa rin si Papa, wala lang ave! (Hey, language, please.)

• Rita Avila-Juinio: 'Yan ayan nang-regalahan ang isa't isa. (And we should care because...?)

• Charlie Swank ang pangalan dahil sa pera. (Ayan si Oprah 'yan.)

• Julius Magdangal gabi na gaw'n sa amor! (This, we shall pass.)

• Toni Gonzaga magpapaawat mama daga thread. (Tanay na mahirap din siya!)

• Maria Aurora Subiadilao na ang cmail sa Pinas. (Which one?)

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4) WOLFMAN R-16 1:50, 4:30, 7:30, 9:40
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